HEROES IN CRISIS: TOM KING'S MOST PERSONAL STORY YET!

DC NATION

• ISSUE #3

HOSTILE TAKEOVER!

SCOTT SNYDER'S LEGION OF DOOM & WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE DC UNIVERSE!

PLUS!

NEIL GAIMAN'S **SANDMAN UNIVERSE**

BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS' **ACTION COMICS**

GEOFF JOHNS' **DOOMSDAY CLOCK**

& MORE!

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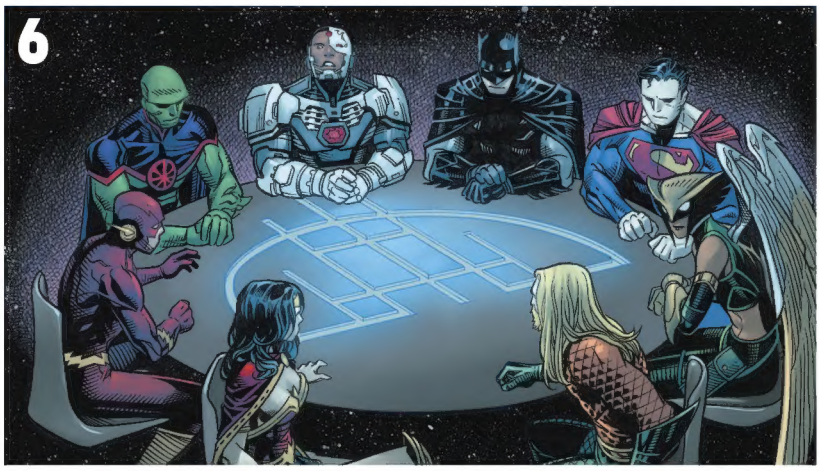

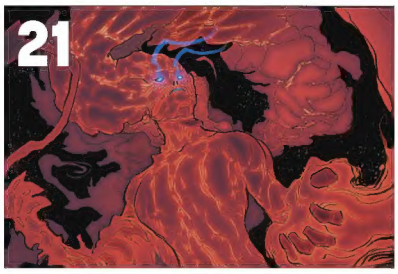

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Letter from DC Publisher Dan DiDio

DC Publisher
DAN DIDIO

Coming out of our recent DC Comics summit, we couldn't be more excited about what we've got planned for the rest of 2018 and well into next year.

You'll get a small taste of what we're cooking up in this issue's look at the summit and its attendees, but we're already hitting the ground running with our recent announcements of Grant Morrison and Liam Sharp launching a new Green Lantern book in November, and the launch of a Sandman Universe line of titles this month from Neil Gaiman and a quartet of writers in SANDMAN UNIVERSE #1.

Grant's THE GREEN LANTERN is the most natural fit of all.

I always enjoy working with Grant, and we were just having dinner one day. It was really just sitting there chatting and him filling me in on some of the stuff that he's working on in TV and things like that.

But when we talked about Green Lantern, he turned it down.

Within 10 minutes he started downloading idea after idea after idea.

We're also launching a new series of mature-reader books under the new Black Label line of titles. But the idea isn't just to take Batman or Superman and put them in more violent or graphic situations–it's to give creators a little more freedom to get to the core of those great characters with fewer restrictions.

When you read 1988's BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE, Batman is Batman in that book, Joker is Joker. It's a more mature story, but the reality is that they're the characters that if you were a longtime Batman fan, you'd still recognize. You aren't lost, you know exactly who Batman is and how he acts and behaves. I think it plays to a slightly more mature audience, and what it does is allow us to explore different types of themes and stories that we wouldn't normally do in these characters' ongoing series.

Stay tuned for more on what else we have planned; we can't wait to share more as it all gets closer.

As DC NATION was going to press we learned of the passing of Steve Ditko. The word "legendary" gets thrown around so much it can lose its meaning, but here it was earned. A decades-long career saw Ditko co-create Blue Beetle, The Question, Captain Atom, Hawk & Dove, The Creeper, Spider-Man (and so many classic Spidey villains), Dr. Strange (and the beautifully-weird dimensions of magic). He gave us all so much.

STEVE DITKO
1927-2018

DC NATION #3 COVER
by Rafa Sandoval
with Tomeu Morry

DC INSIDER

How I broke into comics with... HOWARD PORTER

"As far as I can remember, there were always comics in my life! But when I was in elementary school, my bus driver was a comic book fan, and he would trade comics with me. I would only have one or two and he would give me a shopping bag full of books. In 1988, when I was at art school, I became an inking assistant for [Silver Age artist and DC editor] Dick Giordano. I started working with him and with a bunch of other inkers in southern Connecticut. Eventually I worked up four or five pencilled pages that made up a Green Lantern story. Dennis Janke, an inker on SUPERMAN at the time, brought me into the offices one day, and I went around to the different editors, who gave me great feedback. But I was about to get married and nothing had come of this comic book stuff, so I said, 'I think it's time to try to find a job and be a responsible adult.' Then, five days before my wedding, I got a call from DC. It was [editor] Ruben Diaz, who had my sample sitting there for months, and he asked if I would do a fill-in issue on DARKSTARS. I said yes–the door is open, so I'm gonna stick my foot in! It was a tight deadline, and I did it on my honeymoon." ■

THE FLASH #47 cover by Porter.

YOUR BRAIN STINKS

Prove us wrong by taking the below trivia challenge. Anyone scoring a perfect eight gets 40 Martian dollars!

1 What is Batman's mom's maiden name?
- **A)** Pennyworth
- **B)** Arkham
- **C)** Kane
- **D)** Duuude, you shouldn't talk about Batman's mom.

2 Atlanteans cannot control sea life with their minds. So how does Aquaman do it?
- **A)** His trident grants him the ability.
- **B)** He's a mutation, born from Atlantean and human parents.
- **C)** He was blessed by Poseidon, God of the Sea.
- **D)** [obligatory talks-to-fish joke]

3 How did the master assassin Deathstroke lose an eye?
- **A)** He was in a standoff with archrival Deadshot.
- **B)** His wife shot him in the head in a failed attempt to kill him.
- **C)** His own men turned on him during a special missions op.
- **D)** Scissors. Running. Stay safe, kids.

4 Special time-sensitive question! Answer immediately, no thinking: Which side of Cyborg's head is cybernetic?
- **A)** Left side.
- **B)** Right side.
- **C)** Crap! There are only two real choices, we didn't think this through. Top half!
- **D)** Bottom half! This is getting weird, just pick one already!

5 Bruce Wayne adopted Dick Grayson (the original Robin) when the child was orphaned. So how did Dick's parents die?
- **A)** They were among dozens killed by a Joker poison-gas attack.
- **B)** They were murdered by the gangster Tony Zucco.
- **C)** They're not dead, but they were unfit parents.
- **D)** Not for nothing, but the most dangerous occupation in the DC Universe? Parent. We pop them like popcorn.

6 If Wonder Woman is bulletproof, why does she use her bracelets to deflect bullets?
- **A)** Warrior's instinct: she grew up battling gods and monsters, so deflecting attacks is a reflex.
- **B)** To direct ricochets away from bystanders.
- **C)** She might be bulletproof, but bullets still hurt.
- **D)** It looks dope.

7 On what finger of which hand does Green Lantern Hal Jordan wear his ring?
- **A)** Right hand, middle finger.
- **B)** Left hand, middle finger.
- **C)** Right hand, ring finger.
- **D)** Left hand, ring finger. Hal and the Guardians have been happily married for years.

8 Commissioner Gordon is everyone's favorite hard-boiled cop. What city did he work in before he came to Gotham?
- **A)** New York
- **B)** Metropolis
- **C)** Chicago
- **D)** Toontown, where he teamed with an adorable rabbit to defeat Christopher Lloyd (spoilers).

ANSWERS: 1-C, 2-B, 3-B, 4-A, 5-B, 6-B, 7-A, 8-C

Disclaimer: photo may be misleading.

WHAT I DO...

ROBERT CLARK

Director of Prepress Services and Lettering

WHAT HE DOES

The lettering department comes up with style guides and acts as a liaison between freelancers and the editorial department. Prepress is a graphic services department, and our main focus is preparing our periodicals for print–making sure the art is templated and uploaded correctly from freelance talent, and making sure everything is drawn to spec so it will print correctly.

FAVORITE ALL-TIME DC SERIES

Scott Snyder did one of my favorite Batman stories in recent years: "The Court of Owls." He was brilliant enough to take Gotham away from Batman. One of my arguments is that Batman can beat anybody as long as he's in Gotham, because he knows everything about Gotham. And all of a sudden, he knew nothing about Gotham!

IMMORTAL MAN

When I moved out here from New York, DC was only on the second floor. Certain walls were dry-erase boards, but no one knew about it until Jim Lee started drawing on them. When we got up to the third floor and saw dry-erase boards all around, [editor] Jessica Chen drew [a life-size cartoon of me], and it's been here ever since! We moved up in 2015, so it's been there for a while.

RAGE LANTERN

Hank Manafort used to run prepress, and prepress can be very stressful at times. One of the managers made a joke prop to memorialize Hank's time as prepress manager, and he came up with the Rage Lantern. That lantern would travel to whoever was angriest at the time. You hear someone blow up, you walk in with the Rage Lantern. We treat it like the Stanley Cup–you sign your name and date it. It's great because when you're blowing up, you're having a really bad day–but when someone brings you this, it's funny, no matter what–and it cheers you up. It became a really great stress reliever! ■

TOP: Clark works on a title treatment for an issue of THE FLASH.
MIDDLE: Clark and associate editor Jessica Chen with her drawing of the prepress and lettering director.
BOTTOM: Clark channels his rage as books hit drop-dead on Thursdays.

BREAKING DOWN A PAGE

Writer Tom King, artist Lee Weeks and colorist Elizabeth Breitweiser take us inside their creative process of a page from BATMAN #52!

1 PAGE EIGHTEEN–5 panels

PANEL 1: BATMAN on top of FREEZE, punching him.
CAPTION: "That moment. That fear. That scream.
CAPTION: "I was so scared. And he ran. And he was gone.
CAPTION: "And they took me away. And I got older. I was tried and tested.

PANEL 2: BATMAN on top of FREEZE, punching him, crazy angry.
CAPTION: "I've been on the very top. I've been as happy as a man can be.
CAPTION: "I've had the greatest joys. The greatest friends.
CAPTION: "I've had victories, and I've had...love.

PANEL 3: BATMAN on top of FREEZE, punching him, crazy.
CAPTION: "And then...something happens. You lose something or...someone or...
CAPTION: "And there it is again. I'm there again. Mother's tangled. Father's yelling.
CAPTION: "I'm ten and I'm on my damn knees. And I'm scared out of my damn mind.

PANEL 4: BATMAN on top of FREEZE, punching him, crazy
CAPTION: And feeling that, I say...I become...something, I do things...
CAPTION: I'm not...I am myself. But I'm not what I want to be or what I should be.
CAPTION: I'm scared. And I'll do anything to get out of the fright.

PANEL 5: BATMAN on top of FREEZE, punching him, crazy.
CAPTION: What Batman did here, to Freeze, that violence, that...cruelty.
CAPTION: It didn't leave when he left. It stayed. It's still there, I think.
CAPTION: Even after it, Freeze...he said what he did. He would've said anything... ■

1 TOM KING on the script:

This was a pivotal moment for the story. I wanted to visually show how far Batman's mood on the night in question was from Bruce Wayne's feeling in the jury room, but show that both impulses come from the same hurt. This is where an artist like Lee Weeks is so essential. His art speaks volumes.

2 LEE WEEKS on the layout:

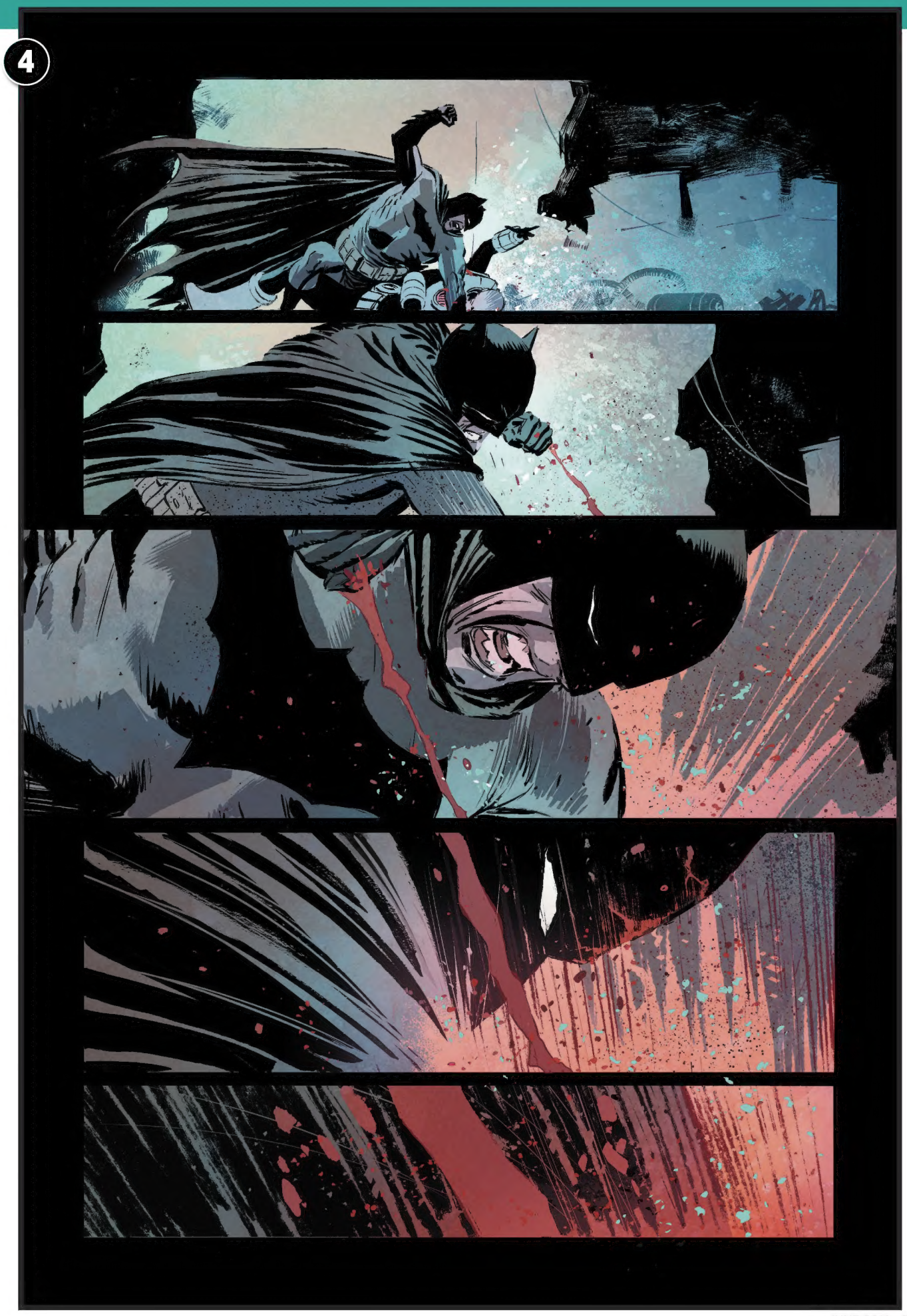
The wide shot was going to be the one time we saw [Batman] fully, so it really needed to set the tone for the rest of the page's action. I spent a lot of time reworking Batman's body language to get the believability of the stretching of the muscles and the way his arm would go back. It's that tiny little shift in body language or a tiny turn of the neck and the head, it's those subtle actions that really sell the moment.

3 LEE WEEKS on the inks:

I wanted to make the vertical movement going down the page get stronger with each panel and each beat and bring the reader's eyes down to almost a single point in almost a Hitchcock-esque camera movement. I wanted the reader to see Batman's rage and continually be drawn, past the face, until you see nothing but the effect of the action, the reader left to infer, making it even more brutal. Comic art–and all art, for that matter–functions more dynamically when it becomes an invitation rather than just a presentation. The reader is asked to participate in the telling of the story through inference.

4 ELIZABETH BREITWEISER on colors:

Batman is losing control in this sequence, and the colors needed to appropriately reflect his deteriorating psychological state. To achieve this, I began with a neutral palette accompanying blue tones for Mr. Freeze, then worked in more and more fiery reds as Batman's violence escalated. Batman may be winning the physical fight with Mr. Freeze, but he is definitely losing his battle for self-control.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INSIDE THE DC SUMMIT

Your backstage pass to the secret meeting between comics' top writers and the entire DC Comics editorial team as they map out 2018 and beyond

By Mike Cotton

It keeps DC Comics publisher Dan DiDio awake at night.

Tasked with navigating a challenging market; contracting industry readership; competition from video games, movies, TV, streaming and apps; and titanic corporate mergers that come along once in a generation...none of which interrupts DiDio's sleep.

It's stacks of unread comic books that haunt him.

Dusty piles crammed on every square inch of a nightstand.

Coffee tables serving as cover for packed longboxes.

All of them untouched by readers who buy them obsessively, won't stop collecting them and take forever–if ever–to read them.

It's a haunting and sobering thought: In an age when superheroes are available in every medium, why must superhero fans buy comics?

That was also his challenge to the creators who gathered together at the most recent DC Comics creator summit, a meeting of the minds between talent and editorial to craft the direction for both individual books and the DC Universe as a whole.

"I want people running racing home," jokes the gregarious, brashly honest 58-year-old addressing the editorial staff and a large portion of the writing talent two months ago in downtown Burbank, CA.

"When someone buys a DC comic book, I don't want them waiting to get home to read it," says DiDio, as he grins at nearby chief creative officer/publisher Jim Lee. "We have to get back that sense of urgency."

It takes a lot to command the fans' attention these days. Simply being good isn't good enough anymore. And that's the message DiDio and Lee reinforce to the dozens of writers and editors in attendance for the next 48 hours. As writer after writer pitches their respective books to the assembled group and receives feedback, everyone takes the mission to heart: to make sure DC publishes the most dynamic, dramatic and exciting shared-universe comics possible.

Inside the conference room of a downtown Burbank hotel, the future of DC Comics takes shape. Sit down for a front-row seat to hear the pitches, eavesdrop on the discussions and get in on the ground floor as the next phase of the original comic book unvierse unfolds.

DC publishers Jim Lee and Dan DiDio address the summit

"Empower the artist and they'll stick with your book..." –BRIAN AZZARELLO

SUPERMAN writer Brian Michael Bendis catches up with ELECTRIC WARRIORS writer Steve Orlando

GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE

The first topic addressed is the most obvious: If comics are a visual medium, why are only writers here–where are all the artists?

The honest answer: the goal of this summit is getting the writers on the same page, not just in terms of producing quality stories, but also about what's going on in the wider DCU: from the Superman Theory in Geoff Johns' DOOMSDAY CLOCK, to Brian Michael Bendis' plans to resurrect a long-dormant team in the pages of SUPERMAN, to Tom King's ideas for the next 53 issues of BATMAN in the wake of the Bat-wedding that never was, to Scott Snyder's diabolically complex weaving of threats and mysteries in JUSTICE LEAGUE. And this is the first of many upcoming creative meetings that will include a wider range of talent.

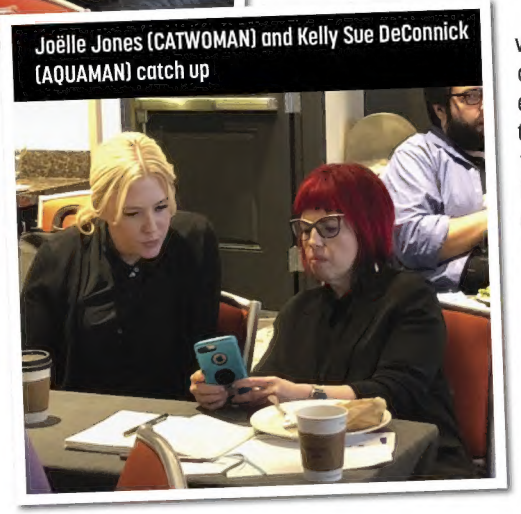
But just because the focus revolves around story doesn't mean art isn't top of mind for the room. In fact, it's the first major topic opened to the group by Bendis, who recently joined the DC Comics fold after a long, successful tenure with Marvel. He implores the room of writers to actually speak to the artists they collaborate with as often as possible.

"When I was working with Chris Bachalo, he showed me how I'd written a scene on a rooftop," relays Bendis. "He said it was a great scene, but it probably took me a few hours to write, and now he was trapped on that rooftop for a week and a half drawing it–and he hates drawing rooftops. It really changed how I thought about writing for artists."

"Empower the artist and they'll stick with your book," adds Brian Azzarello.

"Working with Greg Capullo is how I learned to write comics," admits Snyder as he references a page from the duo's BATMAN run, where Capullo tilted the images on the page in a way the writer didn't think could work, but that eventually became one of the most memorable moments from the "Court of Owls" storyline.

"Comics still offer things you can't get anywhere else," says Lee, whose superstar art career is still going strong well into its third decade. "You can't get the double-page spread anywhere else. Screens don't get bigger for the big moment in movies. You can't get that same feeling of turning a page to a well-placed double-page spread in other media."



Joëlle Jones (CATWOMAN) and Kelly Sue DeConnick (AQUAMAN) catch up

Between discussions of art theory and creative touch bases, the summit almost immediately begins to run behind schedule. When the lunch arrives, it finally offers a pause for the writers and editors to decompress.

Mealtime gives editors such as Katie Kubert, who has never met current AQUAMAN writer Dan Abnett in person, a chance to finally catch up with the UK-based scribe who's usually a voice on the other end of the phone. Bendis catches up with HARLEY QUINN writer and pal Sam Humphries and fellow Portland resident Kelly Sue DeConnick, who's attending her first DC summit as she embarks on an AQUAMAN run at the end of 2018.

Across the room, Geoff Johns and Superman group editor Brian Cunningham discuss the midway point of DOOMSDAY CLOCK, while Snyder, James Tynion IV and Joshua Williamson discuss the long-term plans for the Justice League line of titles. Peter J. Tomasi and Dan Jurgens discuss craft and how much DC's evolved in the years since Jurgens wrote "The Death of Superman" in the 1990s and Tomasi edited AQUAMAN, JSA and GREEN LANTERN.

With the din of conversation growing louder, DiDio soon calls the meeting back to order for something the writers are both excited and trepidatious about–five-minute pitches followed by five minutes of critique and recommendations from a room of peers, colleagues, total strangers and creative execs.

No pressure.

AND HERE'S THE PITCH!

Sticking to five-minute bursts proves to be tough.

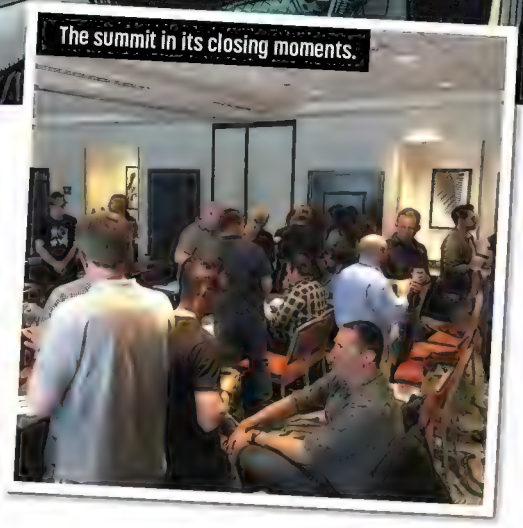
It's a continuous whirlwind mix of information, excitement and tension discussing the various intricacies of every book in the DC catalog.

Joëlle Jones–dressed in all black like the namesake of her series–talks up her plans for writing and drawing CATWOMAN, everything from giving Selina a definitive origin to juggling the bombast of creating a monstrous new super-villain with the more personal side of Catwoman dealing with her sister's mental health.

Benjamin Percy's booming, made-for-radio voice provides insights on NIGHTWING, sparking a ping-pong conversation with the room that elevates and expands a mid-size story beat into something that will change Dick Grayson's life forever by the end of the year.

Scott Lobdell runs down RED HOOD AND THE OUTLAWS, outlining Jason Todd's continuing spiral into a darker, more dangerous antihero.

Marc Andreyko dishes on his SUPERGIRL plans, taking Kara and her mission of



The summit in its closing moments.

vengeance into space and into direct conflict with the Green Lantern Corps.

It all goes about as smoothly as you'd expect with a production of this size. In fact, outside of Azzarello–who sets his phone alarm for exactly 300 seconds and, to the laughter of the room, returns to his seat the second it begins to buzz–everyone goes over their allotted time.

One of the highlights of the summit: DeConnick's Aquaman pitch. Kicking off her presentation by saying it's a bit intimidating pitching the Sea King in front of Geoff Johns (who reinvigorated the character as part of DC's New 52 launch) and Dan Abnett (current writer on the book), DeConnick embarks on a 40-minute tear about her approach to the AQUAMAN series. Detailing her take on the King of Atlantis, she plays air guitar while explaining how she more "hears" the look of the book like a Led Zeppelin riff, than sees it. The room eats it up.

While DeConnick's pitch was the time to beat, it's not the only one to push past the allotted interval by more than triple. Writer Robert Venditti's HAWKMAN rundown spurs a lot of discussion about the core of the character. Is Carter Hall just Conan with wings? Is he more archaeologist-explorer than brawler? Are his threats physical or metaphysical? In the character's 78-year history, Hawkman has been all of those things and a dozen others. But what should Hawkman be for today? When he returns to his seat, Venditti's defined not just his HAWKMAN story, but who Hawkman is through the wider lens of the DC Universe.

"Working with Greg Capullo is how I learned to write comics..." –SCOTT SNYDER

The final rundowns go by fairly quickly and easily from there. But it's a coin flip as to whether that's because the pitches are extremely buttoned up, or because after the 48-hour marathon session, everyone's worn out.

As writers begin to head out to leave for the airport to return to Atlanta, the UK, New York and various other destinations, DiDio offers one last true and sobering thought for the room:

"This isn't the end," says the publisher. "The real work begins when you get home and have to write. This is just the start."

MATCH GAME!

Writer Brian Azzarello's known for playing his cards close to his vest, can you match the photo to the emotion he's feeling:

___ HAPPINESS
___ ANGER
___ STRESS
___ WONDERMENT
___ SADNESS
___ BEMUSMENT
___ EXCITEMENT
___ BEWILDERMENT
___ JOY
___ DISAPPOINTMENT

DOOMSAYERS

JUSTICE LEAGUE writer Scott Snyder asks readers to set aside their hero worship and follow Lex Luthor's Legion of Doom into a new era

By Andrew Marino

Lex Luthor has hatched a million different schemes in his bid to lead and improve humankind while simultaneously eliminating the threat of metahumans–and he's failed.

But in Luthor's latest campaign against the Justice League, their doom appears to be an almost absolute certainty.

In the current JUSTICE LEAGUE run from Scott Snyder and company, Lex recruits a gang of so-called "villains" to form a new Legion of Doom, but with a twist. This time around, they're not just cracking skulls and looking to take over the world–they're waging a war for the hearts and minds of humankind, and are looking to prove to humanity that the Justice League's very existence threatens us all. The Legion of Doom isn't out to dominate us or enslave us, they're here to free us.

Luthor's pitch goes something like this: the metahuman heroes of the Justice League are more like an addiction–we've become dependent on their help, complacent in our lives, and have turned away from humanity because we'll never lift a bus or run faster than light.

We tapped Snyder to explain this new iteration of the Legion of Doom as we examine the individual members and what roles they will play in their latest bid for world ~~domination~~ liberation in the pages of JUSTICE LEAGUE!

LEX LUTHOR: THE MAN WITH A PLAN

Lex takes on a mission to show humanity the truth about our place in the universe. "He has a deep belief that we are meant to be something other than what we are. To have us be the center of the universe," Snyder says. "He's assembled a team where each member forms an argument for him. This is the entire prism of what human nature should be. Luthor says we should truthful, we should embrace it and use it for what we're really meant to be. Whether that's conquering nature or throwing down the gates of Valhalla and saying to the gods, we don't need you."

SINESTRO: SHINING A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Not only do people need to see the truth, they need to recognize that it's going to be ugly. But it's necessary to shine a light on it, even though these feelings may not be traditionally heroic. Who better to help do that than Sinestro, master of the yellow light of fear and now the invisible spectrum? "Sinestro wants you to know yourself. We're creatures of will and fear, but deep down we're creatures of other emotions that we're not looking at. We need to put a spotlight on those," Snyder explains. "Before you decide to use willpower and these visible impulses to try and prove to other people that you're something you're not, look inside yourself and know yourself. That's the only way you can truly be happy."

GRODD: AN OPEN MIND LEADS TO TRUTH

Once the ugly truth about humanity has been revealed, it's up to us to embrace the darkness in our hearts. Grodd is a being with immense telepathic abilities, which allow him to peer into what our minds really think and want. He strives to help us pull back the curtain on ourselves. "Grodd knows our natures are selfish and dark," Snyder posits. "So he asks, Why pretend to be these communal and altruistic beings? You want what you want, so you should have it. We have only so much time on this Earth, so be true to yourself and your own nature. The more you delay, you might never wind up with true happiness."

BLACK MANTA: MASTER THE WORLD AROUND YOU

After we've taken hold of the emotions and desires that we've buried inside, we'll finally be able to recognize that the world should work for us, not the other way around. Black Manta devotes his life not just to exacting revenge against Aquaman, but also to wresting control of the Seven Seas away from him to give them back to humanity. "Manta believes that, instead of just respecting the natural world and paying deference to it, we should control it and whip it into shape. We should rule it," details Snyder. "He says, isn't it great to see a huge mountain, but isn't it better to make it into your castle? It's our purpose to take this world and shape it how we want. We wouldn't have been given these abilities if Earth wasn't made to be our playground."

CHEETAH: BELIEVE IN YOURSELF, BELIEVE IN ONE ANOTHER

As we take control of the world around us, we also need to throw off the shackles imposed on us by the would-be "heroes." We don't need faith in these beings anymore now that we've found the power inside of us. Cursed by the gods, Cheetah sets out to help us unchain ourselves from beings who don't have our best interests at heart. "Look at our gods. They're worse than us. They prey on us and take advantage and manipulate us," Snyder explains. Instead, what we really need to do is: "Don't look up above, look to each other. We are the ones that make our own destiny. Don't wait to be blessed because you can do it. Have faith in each other and humanity."

JOKER: REALIZE YOUR ULTIMATE SELF

After you've fully embraced yourself and your place in the world, then you can finally step into the future. You'll no longer be held back by any limitations society has imposed upon you. This is what the Joker wants you to see. "When you let go of the expectations of society, you'll finally reach your final form," says Snyder about Joker's beliefs. "At the end of the day, all that matters is me, and what I want and who I am. To think anything else is crazy. We're meant to be free of every restraint and any impulse you have or want–you do you."

Art by Doug Mahnke, Jamie Mendoza & Wil Quintana

HOW TO...
REDESIGN A CHARACTER

Artist Pete Woods reveals the process of redefining the look of the Red Hood.

I'm Pete Woods, artist of RED HOOD AND THE OUTLAWS. I'm going to take you through my redesign of Jason Todd, the Red Hood.

I've done a lot of character designs over the years and this one had the most iterations. There was so much opportunity to go in so many different directions that it was hard to focus on one particular look. Usually, [I take] about two rounds, but this one took four or five before we could settle on something that we all liked. It was a very different experience, but it was good! I like challenges like this and Jason was a good challenge. We started with the current look...

STARTING POINT

I enjoy the current design with the helmet. I think it's fun, it's cool looking and it's pretty iconic. Part of the challenge of doing this redesign is taking a character who has a pretty cool design and trying to reinvent him and redesign him in a way that's still cool and still fun, but also different.

In the upcoming story, Red Hood is in a dark place and he's shedding his body armor, he's shedding all of the doohickeys, he's shedding the guns–he's going to become more hands-on, more in-your-face, more brutal, and he's gonna take more risks. He's angry. Maybe he's got a death wish. So we had to take away all of that stuff and make him more street-level, more grounded.

ROUND 1

With this round, I was just trying to triangulate a position. I wanted to come at the character in a way that everybody thought was changing him in a more extreme direction than his current look.

We didn't have a clear direction yet. I was sticking close to what we already had with the current design. Taking away some of the body armor, taking away the guns, but keeping the current look.

In figures F and G, it's essentially the same costume, with a few more elements like arm guards and shin guards and the crowbar and the tire iron. He's the same guy, but he's lost the Bat affiliation. He's lost all of the techno-gadgets. So I was still thinking along those lines.

Scott [Lobdell, writer of RED HOOD AND THE OUTLAWS] wanted to go in a much more crazy direction. I was still stuck in the past, while Scott was looking forward a bit. I realized I had to push even further away from the current look.

ROUND 2

With round five, we decided to push it and just go crazy.

Figure A was: "Okay, let's take everything away." He's got a hood there, but he doesn't even have it over his head. Scott's idea from there was "Why not paint his face? Do something out of the box." The first two white T-shirt designs, A and B, really capture that.

Figures C and D were still [about] stripping away things. C has less stuff than D, but we're just experimenting with how far we can take it, while still making him a recognizable character.

Figures E and F were a whim. [I was] sort of inspired by Assassin's Creed and pirate stories and Overwatch's Reaper.

Figure G was another out-of-the-box try at something different–sort of a Lawrence of Arabia look to it. We were going all directions.

Figures H and I were where things started to gel. He's got a strong silhouette–recognizable as the Red Hood, but you can tell things are different about him.

We liked C and D and H and I the best, so I tried to combine them in the next round.

ROUND 2A

Scott wanted to take the helmet away and be much more in-your-face, so we dropped the helmet completely. I liked the idea of keeping his old domino mask–I wanted to make sure he looked like Jason Todd without taking everything away.

We wanted to see his face. We wanted to get some expression out of his eyes, if not his whole face. The hood gave us the opportunity to keep him as the Red Hood, since it's his name, and drop the helmet. We get more emotion out of Jason without losing his iconic element: his hood.

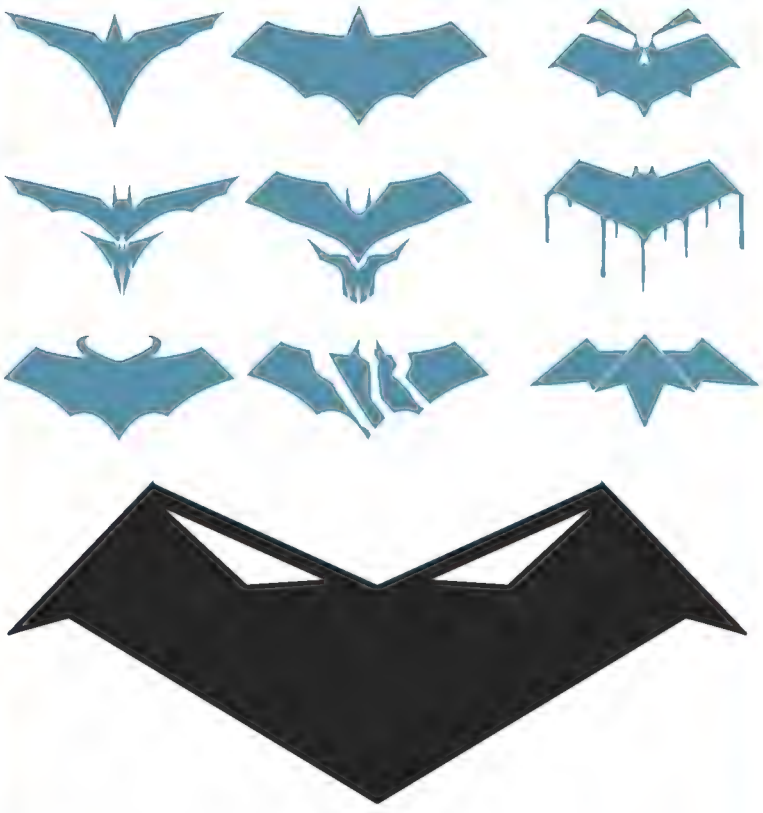
ROUND 3

I've got more body armor than we wanted to have, but I liked the idea of sawed-off screws and pointy tips on his shoes and spikes on his arm guards. It kept a bit of the Bat, but we went further away from that after this round. The idea is that he's not protected like he was before. He's taking things to the source, taking things to the street, and he's just going to go beat up some bad guys.

CLOSE TO THE CHEST

A new look calls for a new emblem!

A new costume called for a new logo, and the new design presented a challenge. I had to give him a unique look: something that separates him from the Bat-Family, while still having those [Bat] elements.



WOODS: I was doodling the character to get a handle on drawing him naturally. I was drawing the hoodie with the mask under it and I thought, "Oh, that's kind of graphic," so I poked around with it. If you look at it, it's the shadow of his hood over his eyes. I really was happy with it and sent it in hoping that everyone else would like it.

ROUND 4

I wanted to give him a design on his jacket, to make him stand out. I put the stripes on his pants–Han Solo stripes, if you will–because I thought it would be cool, and because he's gonna be spending a lot of time in the dark–in the shadows. It would help define his shape in the shadows if we get a flash of red in the darkness. You can still see his outline here and there when he's hiding behind things or when he's running through the shadows. We added the red on the boots and the red on the pants to give us that opportunity, if we wanted it.

We were trying to decide on the color of the shirt. We considered white. We considered gray. But black lets him really sink deep into the shadows, without that flash of white or gray sticking out.

I liked the idea of the sleeveless vest, so you can see I stuck with that quite a bit. We fiddled with the hoodie, but it looked a little run-of-the-mill, something you can buy off of the rack. So, we settled on C because it feels exposed. The vest gives him an edgy look and we gave him a scabbard on the back to carry his weapons. It just looks cool–just a simple black and red design. You can tell who it is. You know by the shape and the hood, you know you're looking at Red Hood–that you're looking at Jason Todd. And it gives us the opportunity to hide him in the shadows, to look dark and menacing when he needs to, and still have a lot of ability to move around. It's not too bulky.

Also, I'm just trying to make him look as badass as possible.

FINAL DESIGN

I knew that figure C (opposite page) was the one I most wanted to draw. I felt like it had the most punch. It was the most interesting to look at and it would be the most fun to draw. So I stuck him in the middle to say, "Hey, look at me, this is the one we should go with." And it worked out!

We still hadn't finalized the logo design at that point, and I was really going for a skull–a Bat symbol that had been modified into a skull–but the design overall is what we decided to go with.

HONING THE EDGES

We only had an impression of the face mask before, so I wanted to make sure that it was clear that he still has his domino mask on, but we've also got, like, a hockey mask that he can pull off when he needs to. One of the things about Jason is that he's always hiding, so we wanted to be able to emote with him, but we wanted him to have a mask at the same time. We were able to find a happy medium with the mask that he can pull off when communicating with people.

We defined the scabbards on the back, instead of on his hips. We tightened up the design of the vest. Defined the belt buckle a bit more and the pants. We trimmed down all of the red stuff on the boots, because in the design before this it was a little too much.

Also, I slickened things up a bit to show everyone how we're going to light him–how we're going to approach his look. And we'd finalized the logo in between these stages.

TIRE IRON VERSUS KATANA

Scott wanted to go with the katana, and it made sense for the character so I said, Why not? The tire iron was a fun reference to the first time he met Batman, but really the katana is much more his thing.

He needs something more to the point than a tire iron, something that's actually more threatening than a guy standing across the room with a tire iron and a crowbar. So, when he needs the katana, he can use it. Variety is the spice of life.

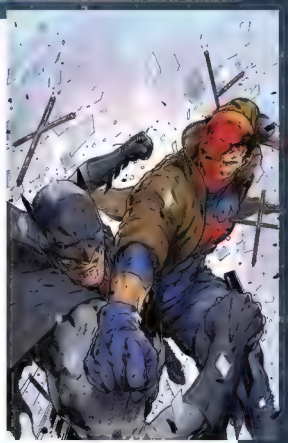
Final Design

RAGING ROBIN

The Red Hood's new look also signals a new direction for the anti-hero

Jason Todd broke Batman's cardinal rule in July's RED HOOD & THE OUTLAWS when he shot and tried to kill the Penguin with a bullet to the villain's monocle–now the Dark Knight is back in Gotham to take his former partner to task for his sins!

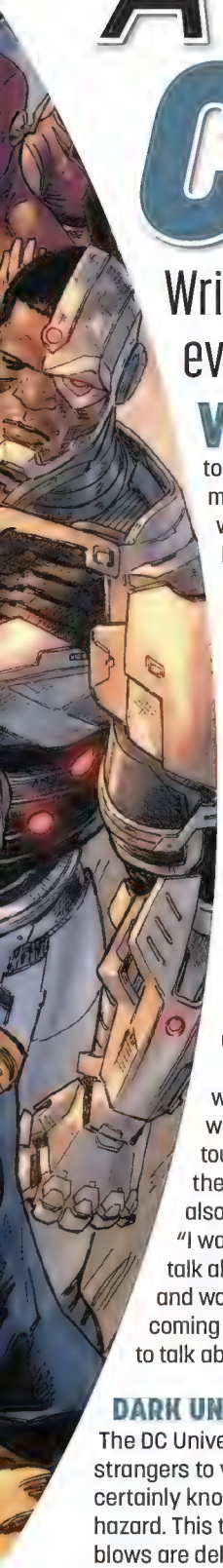
But Jason could use some help from the Outlaws while confronting an angry and betrayed Batman in the oversized 25th issue **(August 8)** from writer Scott Lobdell and artist Dexter Soy. With his team out of the picture, the one-time-Robin must turn to a former teammate and pal for help...



HEROES IN CRISIS artist Clay Mann's cove to issue #1 (above) and black and white interiors (opposite).

A CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE

Writer Tom King puts a personal spin on the latest superhero event in HEROES IN CRISIS



What happens when a safe space becomes unsafe? The heroes of the DC Universe are about to find out in the new seven-issue HEROES IN CRISIS miniseries from writer Tom King (fresh off of the Bat-wedding heartbreak in BATMAN #50) and artist Clay Mann (SUPERMAN).

HEROES IN CRISIS traverses King's deeply personal take on the psychological toll exacted by a lifetime of superhero work–and it also includes a good old-fashioned murder mystery at its core.

Five years prior to the events of HEROES IN CRISIS #1 (Sept. 26), Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman established an institution called Sanctuary in the unassuming plains of rural Nebraska. On the outside, Sanctuary is disguised as an isolated ranch, but on the inside, Sanctuary is a futuristic compound built from Kryptonian technology, operated solely by robots and holograms, where superheroes can go to lay bare their deepest shames and regrets.

Visitors include everyone from Booster Gold to Wally West to Poison Ivy–and many more in between. From his own perspective, King understands the need for such a place in the DCU.

"I'm one of like a million people who went through this endless war we have going on," he said, touting the nobility of fighting for the betterment of humanity while also acknowledging its costs. "I wanted to talk about that, talk about the risks these men and women take by going out and coming back. There's no better place to talk about that than DC Comics."

DARK UNDERCURRENTS

The DC Universe heroes are no strangers to violence, and death is certainly known to be an occupational hazard. This time, however, the death blows are delivered not by megalomaniac villains or Earth-shattering cosmic disturbances, but potentially by one or two fellow heroes.

Inspired by his admiration for the detective stories of Agatha Christie and Dashiell Hammett–as well as Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' WATCHMEN–King chose to structure his story as a murder mystery, explaining that he'd always wanted to write one, and noting that some of the greatest stories have murder at the center of them.

But King makes sure to focus on the trauma that comes after the murders as well–the pain of those who are left behind and forced to pick up the pieces.

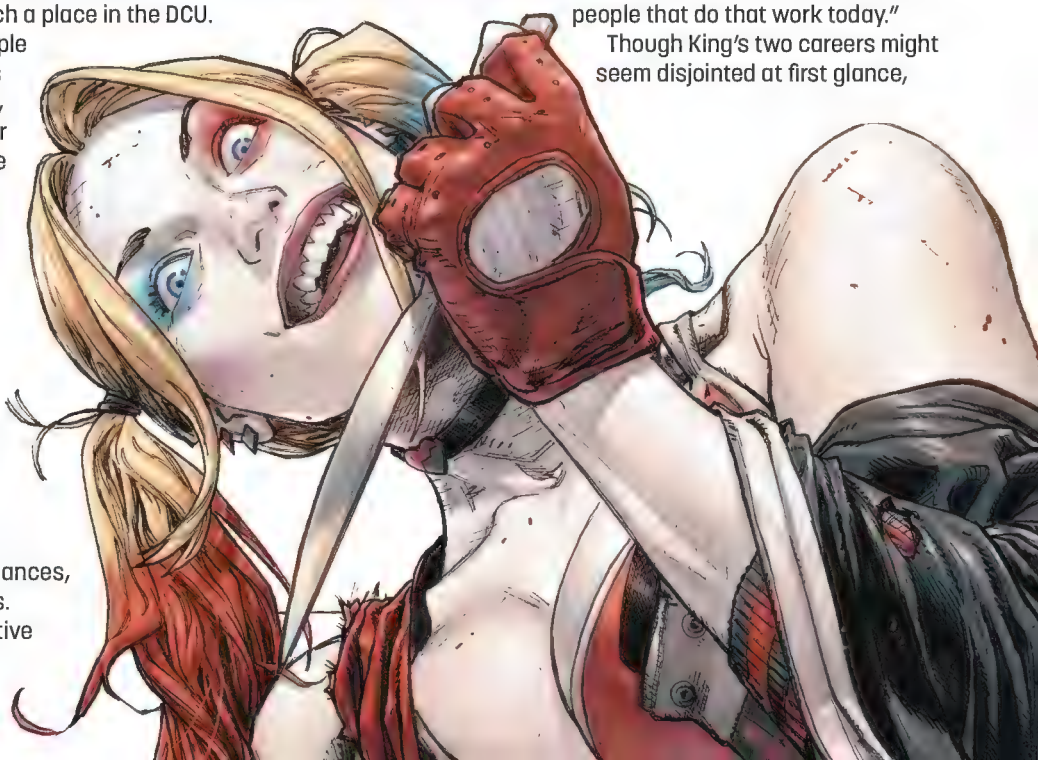
"I think all of this stuff has been in comics since the very beginning," King said, theorizing that Jerry Siegel's father's death during a robbery inspired Siegel to eventually co-create Superman with Joe Shuster. "That's our whole foundation, a moment of trauma of a child and his father. I think that psychological undercurrent has always been in DC."

SECRET IDENTITIES

Having served for seven years as an operations officer in the C.I.A., King himself knows a little something about the anxiety so often intertwined with a life of secrecy and violence.

"I did counterterrorism work overseas," said King. "My job was to recruit terrorists to spy on other terrorists. It was the greatest job I ever had. I was super proud of it, and I'm super proud of the people that do that work today."

Though King's two careers might seem disjointed at first glance,



King pointed out that being a good writer and being a good spy are "completely tied to each other."

"I think the key to both things is empathy," he said. "If you're trying to go overseas and talk to a guy who's lived as much a different life from you as you can possibly think, with thousands of different values, you still have to find common ground with them and see the world from their perspective. That's the best way to be a spy. The same thing applies to writing: You have to get into someone's head and see what makes them work."

THE TRINITY

Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman each saw the need for a place where superheroes could decompress for a few days or a few weeks, unloading their darkest secrets and deepest fears to a non-judgmental–and totally secret–third party.

And as the founders of Sanctuary, each contributed something unique from their persona to ensure that the much-needed therapeutic institution would come to fruition.

"It's built out of them in a literal sense," explained King. "It's Batman-built, out of Kryptonian technology, with Wonder Woman's sense of compassion."

It was revealed at the end of BATMAN #43 that Poison Ivy visited Sanctuary, and Booster Gold's stint there is alluded to in BATMAN #47. So, does the Sanctuary clientele also include the three members of the Trinity?

King's not telling–not yet, at least–but he did offer a glimpse into the psyches of two of the big guns, and what they might talk about if they did go to Sanctuary.

"Batman is very exact about who he is and when he is that person, and he thinks that he knows himself very well," King said. "But I think Superman lives in a fluctuating environment where sometimes he's Clark Kent, and sometimes he's Superman, and sometimes he's somewhere in between."

In other words: Which is the mask and which is the hero's true identity? Only Sanctuary knows...

COMPLEX HEROES

HEROES IN CRISIS opens with a lot of dead bodies and two prime suspects: Booster Gold and Harley Quinn, with each pointing a red-handed finger at the other.

It's up to the investigative team of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman to figure out whodunit, but it's up to King, of course, to analyze who Booster and Harley truly are.

"They're kinetic reflections of each other," King said, "because they're two people who don't know themselves fully, and they use a frenetic way of talking to deflect the world."

Certainly, as part of the therapy process, Sanctuary aims to help an individual involved in the superhero life rediscover their sense of self.

Batman #47 cover by Tony S. Daniel.

However, do these moments of insecurity and pain–instances that reflect a crisis of faith–take away from the heroism of the characters we know and love? Does the necessity for Sanctuary make these superheroes any less super?

"If anything, it makes them more super," King insisted. "I think by presenting the obstacles, the risks and the suffering of the heroes we show how profound and how powerful their actions really are."

That is, in HEROES IN CRISIS, we see the citizens of the DC Universe explore what it really means to be a hero.

"Being heroic is about overcoming something," King said. "To be infinite and to act infinitely is not heroic, it's just 'to be.' But to be heroic is to have an obstacle and to overcome it; to have someone shout in your face that you will never do this, and to shout in their face: 'Hell yeah, I will.'" ■

"They're kinetic reflections of each other, because they're two people who don't know themselves fully, and they use a frenetic way of talking to deflect the world."
–TOM KING

WHO IS THE RED CLOUD?

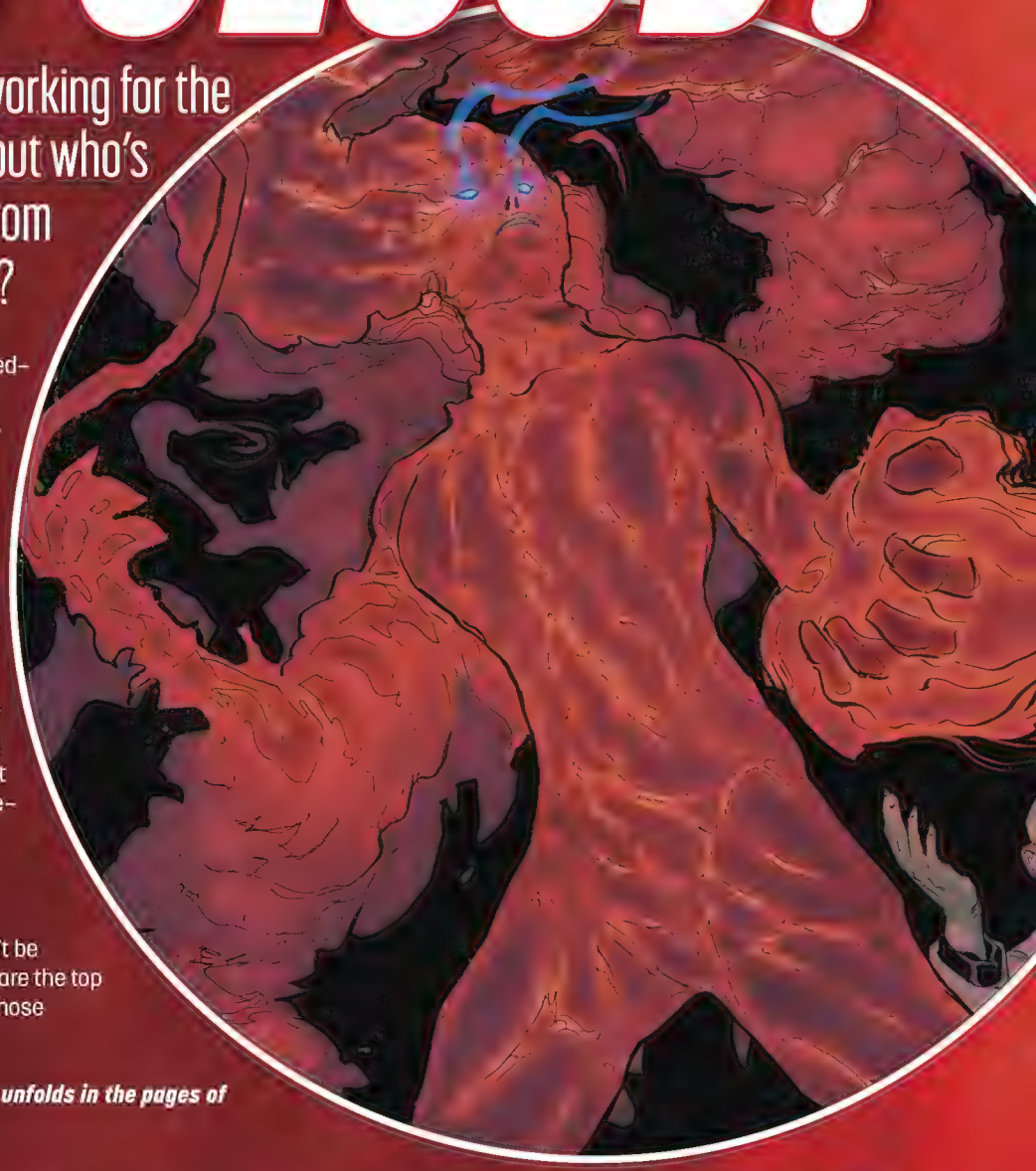
There's a new enforcer working for the Metropolis underworld, but who's threatening Superman from behind the crimson mist?

Super-strength, heat vision, super-speed–none of Superman's powers count for much when facing a villain he can't touch.

Debuting in last month's ACTION COMICS #1001 by writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Patrick Gleason, the Red Cloud keeps the thugs and street bosses of a previously unrevealed Metropolis criminal organization in line.

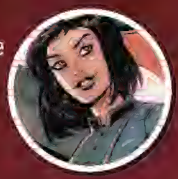
"This is a very different kind of crime story," explains Bendis. "We know so little about where the Red Cloud came from and what she wants. She's part of this organization in Metropolis now, but we haven't met the person who brought her here. We'll see–to even her surprise–that the Red Cloud can go up against Superman. We have an enforcer on the streets of Metropolis who is a challenge to him."

While the Cloud's history and origin won't be revealed until ACTION COMICS #1005, here are the top four suspects who might be hiding under those red fumes.



Follow the mystery of the RED CLOUD as it unfolds in the pages of ACTION COMICS every month!

LOIS LANE



Sure, Lois Lane left Metropolis (and Superman) to chaperone their son Jon's summer trip into space with Jor-El and just returned in ACTION #1001. But why didn't she go home to Clark? Is this actually Lois or an impostor? What better way to strike at Superman's heart than by enlisting a villain who looks just like his wife?

MELODY MOORE

The new Metropolis deputy fire chief seems honest, hardworking and dedicated, but is anyone that clean-cut and upstanding? And isn't a mid-level civil service job the perfect place to hide for a villain tasked with keeping an eye on the underworld of Superman's city?

ROBINSON GOODE

The new Daily Planet reporter already competes with Clark Kent for stories, but is she also ready for a fight with Superman? And as Superman himself knows well, being a reporter is the perfect cover for someone who needs to keep tabs on the criminal element without raising suspicion.

TRISH Q

The gossip columnist for the Daily Planet took an interest in Clark Kent and his personal life when she joined the staff. Could she know more than she's letting on, including Clark's secret identity as Superman? Could a deadly foe be hiding behind her oversize glasses and hipster style?

DEADLY DESIGNS

Inside the creation of DOOMSDAY CLOCK's lethal lovers Mime and Marionette with artist Gary Frank and writer Geoff Johns

Artist Gary Frank loves a challenge.

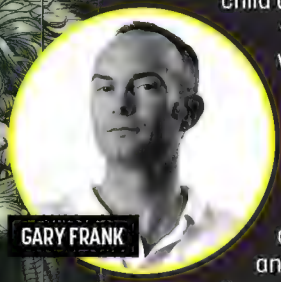
Luckily, his work on the WATCHMEN sequel DOOMSDAY CLOCK with writer Geoff Johns offers challenges in spades.

GEOFF JOHNS

Drawing someone entering an office behind frosted glass? "I had really no idea whether it was gonna work or not," says the 49-year-old artist.

Drawing a medical X-ray? "How do you draw an X-ray?" he asks.

And then there's the biggest challenge of all, adding the first new major characters to the Watchmen universe with Mime and Marionette, two villains hunting for their child across realities.



GARY FRANK

"We couldn't really do something which was modern-looking," admits the artist. "It had to look like it came from [the Watchmen] era."

And, like the characters from the 1986 series, Mime and Marionette began with inspiration from the defunct Charlton characters Punch and Jewelee before quickly taking on lives of their own in Johns' script and Frank's pencils.

"I wanted to introduce characters that were also like the other Watchman characters: flawed," recalls Johns. "And clearly flawed. Like, their flaws aren't hidden. A little more real. A little more visceral."

With last month's DOOMSDAY CLOCK #6, not only did the series hit its midpoint, but it also revealed the origins of the two characters–childhood friends pushed together through violence. But before the two ever made it to the page, Johns and Frank spent a long time deciding how they should look and read.

Challenging each other for better and bigger ideas, the two didn't stop until they both agreed these characters deserved a place alongside Rorschach, the Comedian and the other WATCHMEN characters.

THE MIME

While his female companion took many more tries, the Mime's look came together fairly quickly for both Johns and Frank.

"It's funny, [Gary] had such a clear vision of Mime and so did I," recalls Johns. "The one thing we talked about with Mime was expressions and what he did. That was something that we had a long talk about. Mime is relatively unchanged; you look at these early sketches and these were the first sketches and they're almost identical to where we ended up.

"For Mime, we looked up Marcel Marceau–there's a standard uniform for a mime. You basically decide if you want a top hat or not. He seemed pretty easy the more we talked. I did a few variations but Mime was pretty simple."

MARIONETTE

The femme fatale, with her razor sharp and razor thin string that can cut a man in two, turned into a tougher challenge for the duo.

"Marionette...we spent quite a bit of time on Marionette pushing the line, various things," says Frank.

"The way we developed Marionette it was literally head, torso, legs, feet," adds Johns. "We talked about every single aspect of who she is. What she would look like and how to make her look unique, too."

MAKING HER DIFFERENT FROM HARLEY

Some of the early designs veered too close to the look of the much loved and well-known Suicide Squad member Harley Quinn.

"I think the last thing that I tried to get in, I tried to get in the diamonds into Marionette, but that didn't make it through to the final draft," admits Frank.

TRYING A FEW DIFFERENT COLOURS FOR THE HAIR. PROBABLY FAVOUR BLONDE THOUGH.
②&③ STICK MORE TO THE MARIONETTE/DOLL THEME. ④ IS MORE SUPERHERO (ALSO HAS A TOUCH OF COLOUR).
2

"The diamonds threw me off because Harley Quinn has diamonds," recalls Johns. "I thought we'd already get some comparisons with Harley Quinn because people would go, 'Oh, there's two women with white makeup that are crazy.' So the diamonds went away pretty quickly."

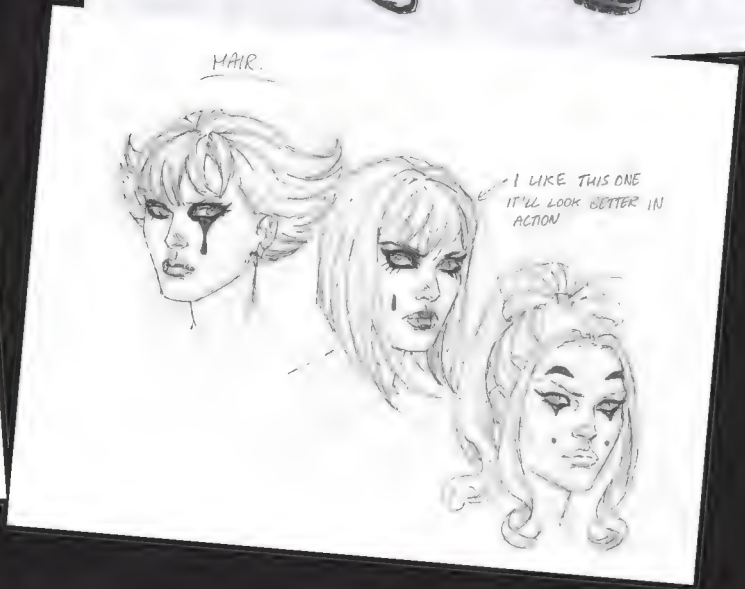
MAKING THE INVISBLE VISIBLE

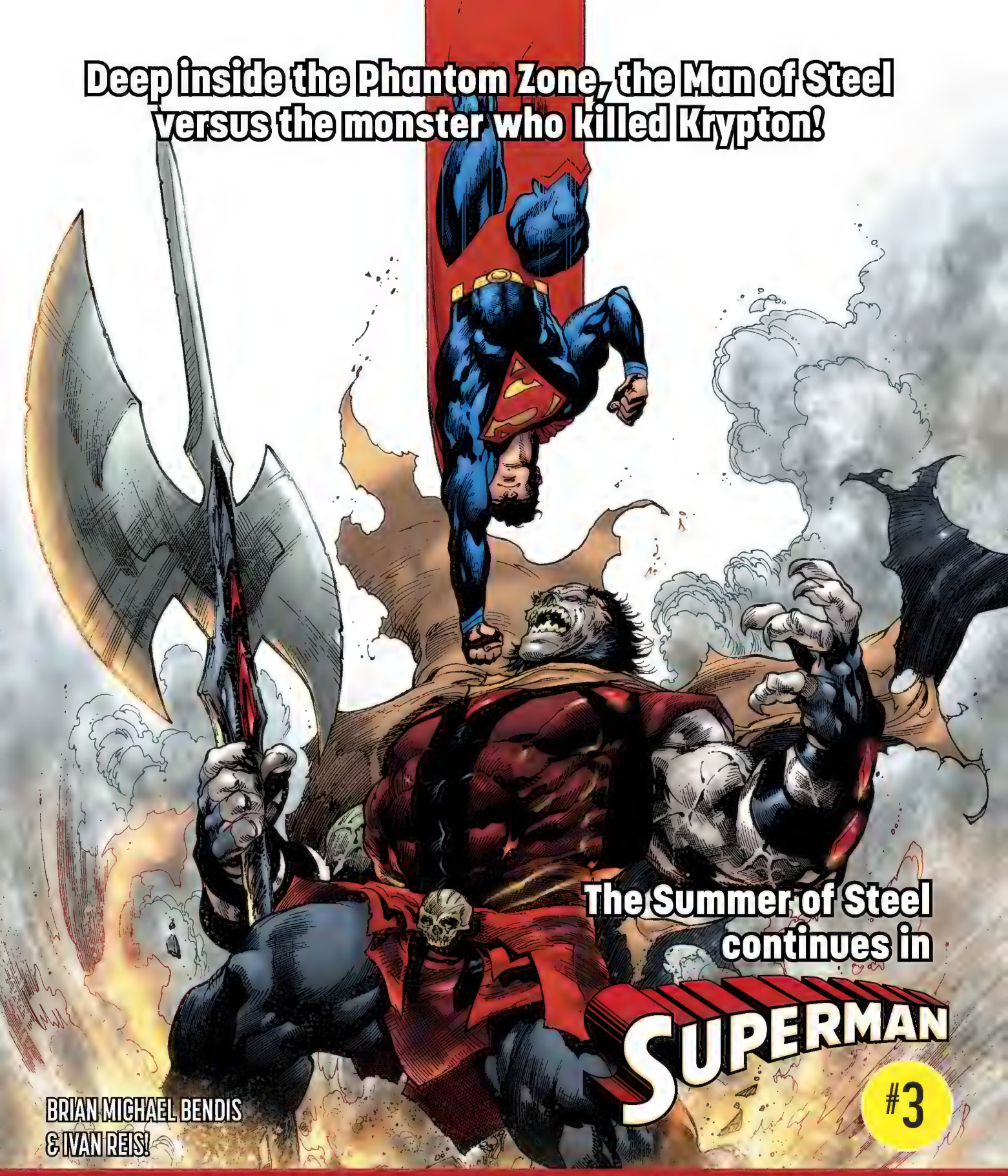
The two new characters also created unique action and storytelling challenges for the writer and artist, with the duo using weapons that can't be seen and a communication style for Mime that relied more on body language than dialogue.

"I always knew the scene where Mime pulled the trigger of the invisible gun and the gun shot," recalls Johns. "That was always in my head. I knew since day one that he would have weapons that weren't there and I knew that I wanted to reveal that in a later issue. That you would think that he's just a little bit nuts and then he actually has these weapons that are kind of these see-through, clear weapons. Then on Marionette, I had this idea for this slicing string."

As Frank drew more of the two communicating, it became easier to allow the reader to know what the two were "saying" to each other without words.

"[Mime] goes from these very exaggerated expressions when he's performing, so to speak, to very, very tight and controlled, almost unreadable," explains the artist. "There's a lot going on his face in terms of extreme expressions–just a little bit of direction of the eye, a little bit of posture. I think it's just because we know them so well, so we're already feeling how they would react. Hopefully that translates through. I'm hoping that at this point, the readers have got a pretty good idea of the nature of their relationship and their personalities and how they interact. It's almost like half the job's already done before I put pen to paper."




Deep inside the Phantom Zone, the Man of Steel versus the monster who killed Krypton!
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SANDMAN SECRETS

By Allyson Gronowitz

Find out what dreams are made of with this guide to the new SANDMAN series

After its last issue over two decades ago, Neil Gaiman's SANDMAN still stands as DC Vertigo's most recognizable and awe-inspiring series.

And this fall, Gaiman teams with a quartet of talented writers well-versed in SANDMAN mythology to launch four new titles that expand and explore the world of the Dreaming.

Even if you're a hardcore fan of everything from the original series to Gaiman's short return to the world and character in projects such as SANDMAN: THE DREAM HUNTERS, here are some key facts you need to know about the new series and their creative teams.

THE WRITERS ARE A "DREAM" TEAM OF COLLABORATORS.

While SANDMAN UNIVERSE SPECIAL #1 (Aug. 8) is plotted by Gaiman to launch the new line of titles, it's co-written by four new voices who count themselves as both professional and personal admirers of the writer and his work. Here's a rundown of the new books and their respective creative teams:

- In THE DREAMING #1 (Sept. 5) from writer Simon "Si" Spurrier (Coda) and artist Bilquis Evely (DC COMICS: BOMBSHELLS), Dream leaves his realm, and chaos ensues. Dream's warden, Lucien, doubts his own mind, as his library of unwritten stories crumbles into decay. Meanwhile, a monstress named Dora takes advantage of the instability and sells dreams to the highest bidder...as something horrific waits with tooth and talon outside the gates.
- In HOUSE OF WHISPERS #1 (Sept. 12), novelist Nalo Hopkinson (Sister Mine) and illustrator Dominike "Domo" Stanton (PREZ) breaks open a brand-new corner of the Sandman Universe: Erzulie Fréda's House of Dahomey–the House of Whispers. From her houseboat on the bayou, Erzulie counsels the souls of sleeping Voodoo worshippers on their futures and their fortunes as they plead for their hearts' desires.
- Lucifer Morningstar is having some difficulties, and he's not even in Hell anymore. Written by Dan Watters (The Shadow: Leviathan) with art from Max Fiumara (Doctor Star), LUCIFER #1 places

Cover to THE DREAMING #2 by Joe Lee and June Chung.

the titular character in a hell of his own creation after he is diverted from his perilous journey to find the mother of his abandoned son and imprisoned by mysterious forces. .

• The original BOOKS OF MAGIC series followed bespectacled magician Timothy Hunter through his teenage years. But the relaunch from novelist Kat Howard (An Unkindness of Magicians) and artist Tom Fowler (Unbeatable Squirrel Girl) jumps back to early on in Tim's journey.

"He's just learned that he's going to be a magician, which is very exciting," Howard began. "The problem is, there's this prophecy about him: He's going to be the greatest magician of his age, but either his power will be for good, or for, like, ending the entire universe."

No pressure for a 13-year-old kid, huh?

"It's a lot to deal with," Howard continued, "but he's also dealing with school, and there's this girl he has a crush on, and this guy who's giving him a hard time. So he's trying to wrangle phenomenal power with, well, getting through algebra."

Clockwise from top center: Vertigo Executive Editor Mark Doyle, Kat Howard, Sandman Universe Editor Molly Mahan, Simon Spurrier, Neil Gaiman, Dan Watters and Nalo Hopkinson

A CREATIVE SUMMIT CONVENED TO HELP DEVELOP THE NEW BOOKS.

As part of a once-in-a-lifetime writers' summit in New Orleans, the four SANDMAN UNIVERSE writers–Spurrier, Hopkinson, Howard and Watters, as well as series editor Mahan and Vertigo executive editor Mark Doyle–were all granted the opportunity to pick Gaiman's brain during a two-day story session, drinking in wisdom from the SANDMAN maestro himself.

"It was so exciting!" said Hopkinson. "Even though I've known Neil for years, whenever we see each other, it's like ships passing in the night because one of us will be working, which means not a whole lot of time to sit and chat and to talk about what we do. To hear his way of thinking about [SANDMAN UNIVERSE], and that he had the confidence and generosity to say, 'Here's the world I made, go and write in it'–it was exhilarating."

The magic extended beyond the marathon story session as well. "We spent an evening just wandering through New Orleans together," said Howard, "and that was kind of marvelous. Especially since Nalo is setting part of her book there."

Even now, many months into the writing process, the thrill of getting to dip into the Sandman Universe is as fresh for the writers as it was on that cold January day in New Orleans.

"I was working on one of the issues the other day, and I could not believe the character that I just got to write dialogue for," Howard enthused. "How is this even my life?"

Did it feel like...something out of a dream?

Howard laughed. "Not so much a dream, because it was one of those things I couldn't have dreamt," she said. "But just in the way of feeling...really right. Like, we're doing something that I think we're going to be really proud of."

DON'T EXPECT TO SEE MUCH OF THE PRINCE OF DREAMS.

While Morpheus stood at the center of the SANDMAN books by Gaiman and his collaborators, THE DREAMING #1 launches with the new Dream–Daniel–gone AWOL.

As Spurrier noted, this isn't the first time Dream's taken a sabbatical from his duties, such as the 70-year period he spent captive in the first few issues of the original SANDMAN series. In other instances, Dream embarked on journeys of his own choosing that kept him away from the Dreaming.

"None of these characters are particularly worried when Dream takes his leave of absence, except when things start going wrong," Spurrier explained. "The kind of world-shaking, world-shattering things that slowly make our cast of characters across all these realms and across all four of these new titles realize that something very, very strange is going on."

In the case of the Dreaming, the sky has quite literally cracked open. "There's something tearing this world apart," Spurrier teased. "They realize they better call Dream, because wherever he is, he should be able to fix this. But they can't find him. And quite possibly when they do find him, it may just be that he doesn't want to come back." ■

FROM THE DESK OF...

GRANT MORRISON

The prolific and powerful writer shares his pitch to reshape the worlds of **GREEN LANTERN** this November with artist Liam Sharp

Grant's pitch is amazing! My notes throughout...
–Brian Cunningham
Editor, The Green Lantern

FROM: **GRANT MORRISON** <xxxxxxx@gmail.com>

TO: **BRIAN CUNNINGHAM** <xxxx.xxxxxxxxxx@dcentertainment.com>

CC: Dan DiDio, Jim Lee, Bob Harras

DC COMICS
THE GREEN LANTERN

THE CONCEPT

No one in the foreseeable future is likely to do as all-encompassing and thorough a job developing the Green Lantern mythos as Geoff Johns in his seminal (2004-2013) run.

We're not even going to try.

Here, the plan is to create a suite of stories that reads differently from the last decade or so of GL adventures, while still maintaining, even strengthening the feel of the core concept, and honoring the rich continuity of both Green Lantern and the DCU.

To create this different feel, I'd like to [redacted] to create a series of Green Lantern stories that will feel timeless and which, hopefully, can be read by anyone. *Bold! I like it!*

No more massive "endgame" stories that leave Oa in ruins, the Corps decimated, and the Guardians revealed as evil manipulators etc. etc., – no [redacted] or [redacted] No Hector Hammond. No Star Sapphire. *No Carol Ferris? Hmm...*

The days of apocalyptic, nihilistic epics are done. We survived the end times. [redacted] We no longer have the luxury of Armageddon to occupy our time with its flamboyant demands!

This is where the Green Lanterns get down to the daily grind of policing the universe. These are down and dirty cosmic procedurals and I'm approaching this more as a TV show (with unlimited effects budget) than a blockbuster summer movie.

To that end, this approach has more of a day-to-day feel, in the sense that this is the kind of thing that happens all the time on this scale of universal law enforcement. [redacted]

We're starting with a new number #1, so I'd like to rename the book THE GREEN LANTERN, adding that all-important definite article.

Ha!

I'd also love to have the words BEWARE MY POWER above the title! (Would make a great T-shirt. All we need is for Sheldon Cooper to wear one…) *I'm shocked nobody's ever thought of this before...*

As the above suggests, I think we should re-emphasise the central idea of the Green Lantern Corps as an intergalactic police force. Generally, and quite understandably given the connotations of the word "Corps," the GLs are played as an army, but I'd prefer to lean more heavily into the cop angle for these stories.

Additionally, it would be good to use this book to map out and consolidate the DC "cosmic" universe – so we'll have appearances by [redacted], the [redacted], [redacted], [redacted],

Using the television show template – a long-form universe-building approach nicked from comics in the first place – our Green Lantern run will be organized into year-long "seasons" of 12 episodes.

These seasons will be comprised of one or two issue procedural adventures with running subplots which seamlessly flow and combine to flesh out a bigger "season arc" story, concluding in [redacted]

Mid-season and season finale stories will be epic enough for "event" status but let's keep consequences [redacted] and continuity for the time being. Unless someone has a great idea for a crossover!

Visually, this is a book about light, albeit mostly green light, so let's not forget that it's a lightshow – spectacular, dazzling, and colorful.

As mentioned, I'd love to capture and develop the feel of French graphic novels, the look of Valerian, Barbarella, and The 5th Element and sci-fi covers from the Golden Age of Astounding Stories, Analog, Fantasy and Science Fiction and all the rest.

Exotic locales, wild-looking alien cultures. Pure pulp thrills with a strange, existential, Buddhist Kerouac core.

Storylines will be fast-paced "super-compressed."

And, as ever, much of this may change as we progress and I get into the rhythm of the stories.

Count me in!

SUPERGIRL

Here's everything you need to know about Supergirl, from her pivotal part in THE MAN OF STEEL to an upcoming space jaunt in her own book

After the traumatic events of THE MAN OF STEEL, Supergirl needs some space–like, all of outer space. Supergirl feels super messed up after everything she endured alongside her cousin (a.k.a. Superman) against the cosmic killer named Rogol Zaar, an omega-level threat with a mad-on against all Kryptonians. To get on the path of healing, Kara Zor-El hits the metaphorical road–in this case, an intergalactic adventure. Her mission? Uncover the truth about Rogol's alleged origins, as well as his ties to Krypton and its destruction.

"Kara is emotionally raw when we start, and she feels like she has no control over her own life," explains Marc Andreyko (MANHUNTER) of Supergirl's state of mind as he takes over writing duties along with artist Kevin Maguire (JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL). "That's why her mission is not just a physical one, but an emotional and spiritual one as well."

To get you ready for Supergirl's jump into outer space **(issue #21 on sale August 8)**, let's take a light-speed look at where she's been, along with a sneak peek at where she'll be going.

Art by Terry Dodson & Rachel Dodson

SUPER SECRET ORIGIN

Kara Zor-El rocketed from the doomed planet Krypton while she was a teenager, witnessing the death and destruction firsthand before she escaped. Severely traumatized, Supergirl mistakenly attacked her cousin and went on a rampage when she crash-landed on Earth. Since then, it's been nothing but pain, death, violence, broken hearts and the world coming to an end– you know, the teenage years. But with heat vision! "[Supergirl's] been defined as 'Superman's cousin'– the Jun to his Marcia, if you will. [She's] trying to 'fit in' and have a secret identity. The Man of Steel [has] made it possible, heck, necessary, for Kara to discover who she was, who she is, and who she wants to be."

SUPERGIRL: SPACE DETECTIVE!

Taking cues from Dashiell Hammett, Supergirl plays hard-boiled detective in this new storyline. And the way to find clues, according to the P.I. code? Rattle the bad guys and see what shakes loose. Of course, in space, everyone can make you scream because they're so super-deadly and scary, so it might not be as easy as it sounds for Kara to uncover the truth about Rogol Zaar's scheme. "The metaphorical journey is just as important as any physical threat or complication she may face," teases Andreyko of Supergirl's character arc. "She's been doing what she thinks she should, and not letting herself find out who she really is."

GIRL POWERS!

Anything Kal can do, Kara can do, too–she's simply the most powerful teenager on the planet. Super-strength, super-senses, flight, invulnerability, heat vision, freeze breath...but growing up on Krypton also gave Kara a more cosmic view than her Earth-raised cousin.

FOLLOW THE DOG STAR

Look, Supergirl can't go into space alone for one simple reason: that's a LOT of thought balloons for Andreyko to write. Seriously, it's dangerous out there, and no way is cousin Kal letting his kin fly cosmically without a wingman. Super-pet Krypto's the perfect choice: loyal, tough, brave–not to mention a great listener. Quips Andreyko: "Why's he a good traveling companion? He's a dog. With superpowers!"

NIGHTMARE OF STEEL

Supergirl suffered a lot more than a sore jaw in the slugfest against Rogol Zaar. She was rocked to her very core by Rogol's claim that he destroyed Krypton.

CLIMB ABOARD MY ROCKETSHIP...MAYBE?

It's funny to think of Supergirl needing transportation, but you can't just fly yourself willy-nilly around in deep space. So, in the grand tradition of great sci-fi like Star Wars, Star Trek and Firefly, Supergirl's gonna get a sweet intergalactic ride that'll be her home for the foreseeable future. But don't expect Andreyko to give us any details: "Kara's mode of transport is [something revealed in] our first issue (#21)."

PLAYING CHAPERONE

The new creative team of Andreyko and Maguire takes over with issue #21 (on sale August 8) for this new space-faring storyline. This intriguing creative team-up could find lightning in a bottle based on their respective talents. Andreyko's crime chops got cut with Brian Michael Bendis on Torso before he honed them on DC's MANHUNTER. Meanwhile, Maguire's known for side-splitting super-action, heavy on the humor and personality. That creative chemistry could get some serious parsecs out of Supergirl's new space-set adventures. "I'm in awe that I get to work with a legend," says Andreyko of his latest collaboration. "The guy who draws the best facial expressions in comics! I am beside myself with glee. We are having a lot of fun, and hope the readers will, too!"

SUPER NEW THREADS

You don't book a trip without stocking up on some new wardrobe pieces–it's the first rule of jet-setting. Expect Kara to flirt with several new looks in her new book depending on the spacy situation. DC NATION scored some sketches of possible new looks Kara will be sporting, and we can tell you this much: Tim Gunn would be proud.

BACK IN BLACK

DC Comics' new Black Label line of titles launches with Brian Azzarello and Lee Bermejo's BATMAN: THE DAMNED

By Michael Nixon

Like a fine wine or good bottle of bourbon from Kentucky, the Black Label concept of books fermented for what seemed like ages to DC staff.

It was over three years ago, when DC Comics offices were based in New York City, that Mark Doyle and the staff began discussing a line of more mature books in the vein of LUTHOR and JOKER, graphic novels by writer Brian Azzarello and artist Lee Bermejo.

For the launch of the new line of titles by legendary creative teams uncuffed from continuity and a ratings system, it made nothing but sense to begin with a new book from Azzarello and Bermejo. Launching September XX, BATMAN: THE DAMNED sees the Dark Knight realize that the Gotham City he knew has a darker–supernatural–underbelly. The Caped Crusader is forced to work alongside magical con man John Constantine, and while this is a mature story, according to Azzarello it still has classic Batman DNA.

"My approach to these things is that you don't mess with the core," says the Chicago-based writer of 100 BULLETS and HELLBLAZER. "At the end of the day, it has to be a Batman story. You have to do recognizable Batman. What we're doing is, we're looking psychologically at what his core can do to him, to screw him up. I've always shied away from bringing that character into a supernatural world, but with this we went full-on. It's more unsettling."

"JOKER was very much a grounded, realistic book," adds Bermejo. "And the same thing goes for LUTHOR; even though it had Superman in it, our focus was much more on the human side of things. This project goes completely the other way. It's our first time playing around with magic and the supernatural side of DC. It's pretty exciting, because we're not really known for doing that, and I don't think people are expecting that with this book. I think they're expecting a 'grim and gritty,' grounded story–and it definitely has elements of that–but I think we're really gonna surprise people with where we go with this."

To get a first taste of the new brew, sit down at the table, pour a shot and listen to Azzarello and Bermejo explain what's unique about the initiative, why they teamed Batman with John Constantine and what was off-limits even under the new Black Label.

Brian Azzarello (left) and Lee Bermejo (right).

What makes your Black Label Batman unique from the main DCU version?

AZZARELLO: Continuity. We just get to tell a story at our own pace. I don't think if it were part of the regular Batman universe, it would be what it is now. I think people are going to be shocked for this direction of Batman. But it's not like we're doing anything out of character, we're just putting him on *HBO*.

BERMEJO: I've always drawn my version of Batman. Even when I did BATMAN: NOËL and JOKER, it's the same look. Almost with every character we do, Brian and I, we always do that. We make the characters our own, as much as we can, and this book is the same thing. At some point in the first issue, we introduce a new look for Batman. It's moving closer to the knight-with-a-K territory. I think it really suits what we're doing with this character.

Why take Batman to that darker–not just supernatural, but adult–space?

AZZARELLO: Why do something that's been done? Let's do something new. Especially with DC's trade program. They've got everything ever published in print. You can get your Batman story from any era that you like. If you like Rainbow Batman, go read that stuff, it's in print. Enjoy yourself.

Guiding Batman on his journey through the supernatural is another fan favorite, John Constantine. What was crafting that team-up like?

AZZARELLO: When I wrote John in HELLBLAZER, I intentionally took a different approach than the previous writers on his book. John had been, up until my run, the narrator of the stories. We were in John's head. And I thought, after over 150 issues–all this time–let's get out of his head and make him the wild card in his stories. Play him like the con man that he was. When he'd show up in SWAMP THING, when Alan Moore was writing it, you didn't know what to expect. I wanted to bring that into it. That's a bit of what's going on in this story, at least from Batman's perspective. This guy knows more about what's going on than Batman does and that just eats at him.

BERMEJO: John Constantine is one of my all-time favorite characters. To be honest, this book feels like I'm getting to do all of my favorite characters. I love Deadman, I love Etrigan the Demon–I'm getting a chance to tackle a lot of characters I love. I did a long run of covers on Hellblazer in the early 2000s, I think I did 33 covers, so John's a character I feel I know really well. Like I said, he's one of my favorites. It's cool to partner him up with Batman and, specifically for this story, he's a pretty important piece of the puzzle.

AZZARELLO: Batman's not in control. John Constantine's in control, because we're dealing with supernatural forces. It's these things with an unpredictability about them. It's the great unknown and it can't be controlled. He's not in his element. He's in Gotham City and he doesn't know what's going on. He's off balance.

Batman and Constantine also work with Deadman. What's your take on that character?

AZZARELLO: We're kind of treating him like, possessing and getting into a body is like being a junkie. It's an addiction, but he can't stay in very long. He's constantly moving around. He's a ghost, he's dead, but he's in the world of the living. He can't touch anything–he's not connected. We gave it a bit of a different spin, all of the characters have a different spin, similar to what we did in LUTHOR and JOKER. Where they were recognizable, but a little bit different, than what had been portrayed before.

BERMEJO: I think we really found a modern key to a lot of these characters. That's the part that I'm most excited about.

Any fun additions to the first Black Label Batcave that we can expect in BATMAN: THE DAMNED?

BERMEJO: I take away more than I add. I don't like the treasure room with the giant dinosaur–it's very serial killer. Maybe there's an argument for someone else, when they do their Black Label Batcave to add, but I think it should just be a cave and that's what I'm doing on this one.

You spoke about the "core" of each of these characters earlier. What was off-limits in terms of changes for you, even with the mature rating?

AZZARELLO: The key to the character is his origin. That's what makes him powerful. Batman's parents were murdered in front of his eyes in an alley and that's why he is who he is. I've said it before and I'll say it again: he has never left that alley. He does everything in his power that he can to not leave that alley. He took over his father's business, he lives in his parents' house, the guy has not moved on. I think that's part of his core.

BERMEJO: The content aspect isn't something I think about too much. The focus is not on doing something that goes for an R rating. It's just the nature of the story. It enables us to do more, but in terms of irretractable visual qualities, there are certain silhouettes of these characters that you have to respect. Deadman has a certain silhouette. Constantine is a guy in a trench coat who smokes–that is that character. Even Batman, there's a color silhouette that character has that I don't like to stray away from. If you were to take all the details of the costume and just place the black and grey where they need to be, to me they need to be in the same space. You can tweak other little details–add things, subtract things–but I feel like that's what makes the core of the characters: the character, visually.

AZZARELLO: We're not screwing with his core. We're screwing with the world around him. By showing Batman that there are things he does not understand and, to a certain extent, can't be understood. That sounds a little Lovecraft, and we're not going in that direction–we're more Cronenberg than Lovecraft.

Any other characters you'd like to tackle for Black Label?

AZZARELLO: Let me finish this one, man.

BERMEJO: Lobo. I'd really like to do something slightly different with that character. ■

LABEL MATES

Frank Miller, John Romita Jr., Kelly Sue DeConnick and many more comic book legends join the Black Label line of books with mature reader takes on Superman, Wonder Woman and the very history of the DC Universe

BATMAN: LAST KNIGHT (October)
Waking up in a desert with no memory of what year it is or why the Joker's still-living head is in a jar next to him, the Dark Knight begins a journey into a strange future where villains triumphed and society seems to operate on no ethical code. With Gotham's protector fighting to survive and find answers, the superstar creative team of writer Scott Snyder and artist Greg Capullo begin the last Batman story ever told.

SUPERMAN: YEAR ONE (November)
THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS and BATMAN: YEAR ONE mastermind Frank Miller teams with the legendary artist John Romita Jr. for a unique retelling of Superman's origins, from his escape from Krypton to his becoming the world's most powerful hero and protector.

SUPERMAN: YEAR ONE
by Frank Miller and John Romita Jr.

THE OTHER HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE (December)
Academy Award-winning writer John Ridley (12 Years a Slave) redefines the historical arc of justice in the DC Universe by examining it from a new perspective: those marginalized in their fight for equity, in and out of costume. A new evolution in the DC Universe is uncovered as Ridley teams with various artists to spotlight characters forced to overcome bigotry for the right to fight for truth and justice.

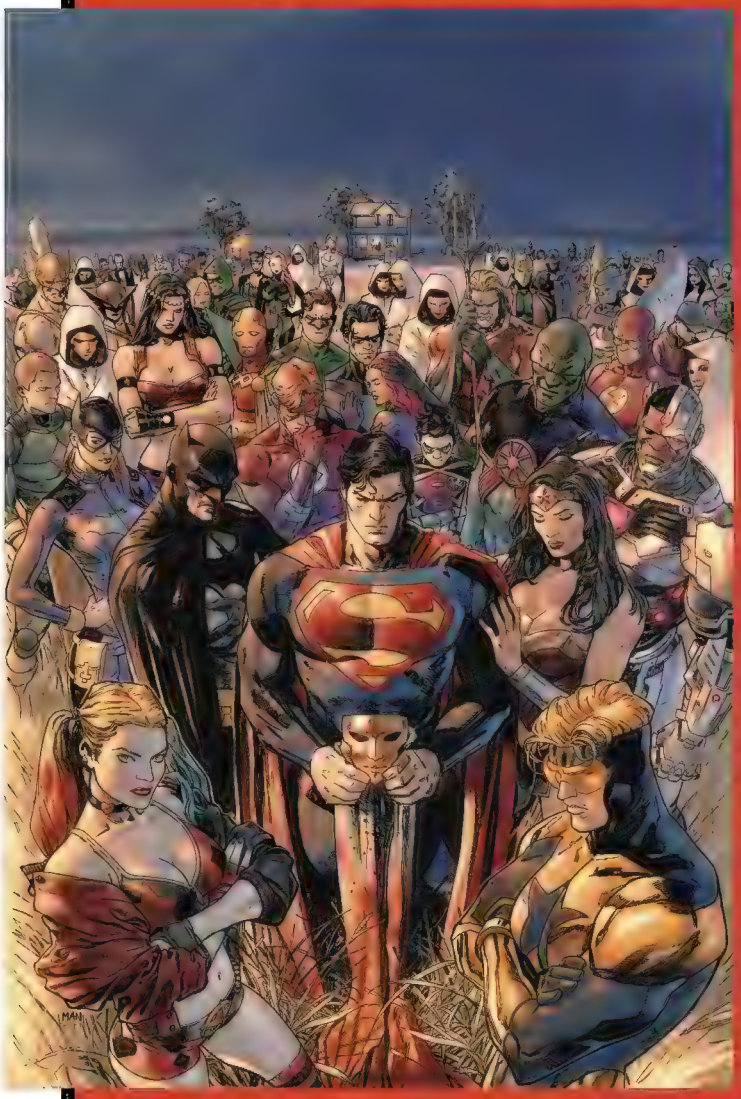
WONDER WOMAN HISTORIA: THE AMAZONS (Spring 2019)
Upcoming AQUAMAN writer Kelly Sue DeConnick scripts legendary Wonder Woman artist Phil Jimenez's return to Paradise Island in the first of a three-book odyssey charting the history of Princess Diana and the Amazons from the moment of their creation to Steve Trevor's arrival on their sacred island.

WONDER WOMAN: DIANA'S DAUGHTER (2019)
Wonder Woman's disappearance plunges the world into a dystopian fall for 20 years. Writer Greg Rucka (BATWOMAN) introduces Diana's daughter on a search for both her mother and her place in the new, chaotic world. Wonder Woman's offspring must discover what her mother's legacy means and save the world before it reaches its breaking point. ■

WONDER WOMAN HISTORIA: THE AMAZONS
by Kelly Sue DeConnick and Phil Jimenez

DIRECT CURRENTS

Your all-encompassing look at the DC Universe for September 2018



BOOK TO WATCH

HEROES IN CRISIS #1 (Sept. 26)

Welcome to Sanctuary, the ultra-secret establishment designed to finally combat an insidious enemy that creeps through the DC Universe: post-traumatic stress disorder.

And HEROES IN CRISIS writer Tom King, a former CIA operations officer, certainly knows a bit about the subject in question.

"In living these violent lives, part of the sacrifice you make is a little bit of your own sanity," King says. "I wanted to talk about what warriors lose in order to fight a war."

Created five years ago by the DC Trinity of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, Sanctuary is a place for superheroes whose experiences combating cosmic and Earthbound criminals have left them with some pretty deep traumas. Sanctuary offers a safe place for those heroes to spend a few days or a few weeks as they navigate the accompanying mental and emotional journeys.

Sanctuary appears to the outside world as an isolated ranch in rural Nebraska, but in reality it is a sophisticated compound built out of Kryptonian technology and populated only by robots, holograms and the heroes who seek therapy there.

As King explains it, each member of the Trinity saw the initial need for Sanctuary, but approached the project from different perspectives. Batman viewed it as a necessity, Wonder Woman viewed it as a kindness, and Superman saw it as a good. But when many of the heroes who have attended Sanctuary turn up dead and Harley Quinn and Booster Gold emerge with blood on their hands, it's up to the trio who started it all to investigate how and why it all went wrong.

Though the seven-issue HEROES IN CRISIS miniseries is likely to tear apart some friendships, the comaraderie of the super team behind the series is undoubtedly going strong.

"Working with Tom is the best," artist Clay Mann enthuses. "Tom was given the ability to tell amazing stories, and I really do love working with him. Besides his storytelling, he's become a friend, and I think that's pushing me to do my best."

For his part, Mann has embraced the challenge of rendering King's deeply emotional script in the accompanying art, especially when it comes to the "hero confessional" panels that take place in Sanctuary.

"It wouldn't be a Tom King book without the nine-panel grid, would it?" Mann jokes. "They are not something I have a huge amount of experience on, so I'm learning as I go. I try to think of them as a flipbook, but on one page."

Who is responsible for the deaths of all these heroes? And will Booster and Harley ever find redemption? It all begins in HEROES IN CRISIS #1, the heart-stopping opener to the most personal DC Universe crisis yet. ■

Tom King (w), Clay Mann (a)

ACTION COMICS #1003

ACTION COMICS #1003 (SEPT. 26)

How well does Clark Kent know his own city? Are the threats targeting Metropolis new or something older and more dangerous than they seem?

With mobsters being killed off and the Daily Planet staff hunting for answers, it's up to Superman to discover what lurks in the underside of the city he thought he knew so well. Who is the Red Mist, and why has Superman never heard of someone so powerful and dangerous? And what is Lois Lane doing with Lex Luthor?

Brian Michael Bendis (w), Yanick Paquette (a)

ADVENTURES OF THE SUPER SONS #2 (SEPT. 5)

Kids today, amiright? What with their vaping, texting, emoji-ing and whatnot–never mind what happens when teen villains the Gang get their hands on Gold Kryptonite! That's exactly what the young bad guys plan to do to impress the Earth's biggest villains! Super Sons Robin and Superboy stand face to face with Rex Luthor, Joker Jr. and other psychos pulled right from your nightmares. ***Peter J. Tomasi (w), Carlo Barberi & Art Thibert (a)***

AQUAMAN #40 (SEPT. 19)

The finale of "Sink Atlantis," the four-part crossover with the Suicide Squad! The undersea kingdom of Atlantis is overrun with black-ops super-villains; a dethroned ex-King of the Seven Seas; and a former assassin-mermaid from the Bermuda Triangle, all locked on a collision course! The Suicide Squad, Aquaman and Mera: no holds barred!

Dan Abnett and Rob Williams (w), Joe Bennett and Vicente Cifuentes (a)

AQUAMAN #40

BATGIRL #27 (SEPT. 26)

You can't go home again. But that's just where Barbara Gordon, a.k.a. Batgirl, is forced to go when the chip granting her mobility keeps shorting out in the aftermath of her clash with Grotesque. Will Commissioner Gordon drive Babs totally bonkers with his bedside manner? Or will the malfunctioning tech impact more than just her legs? Plus, what's the deal with killer art critic Grotesque and his murderous new M.O.? It's all in part two of "Art of the Crime."

Mairghread Scott (w), Paul Pelletier & Norm Rapmund (a)

BATMAN #54 (SEPT. 5)

Dick Grayson–the original Robin–gets to spend some quality time fighting crime with his mentor for the first time since Batman popped the question to Catwoman. It's a walk down memory lane as Bruce Wayne helps Dick get over the loss of his high-flying acrobat parents, which in turn led to his crime-fighting career. Guest artist Matt Wagner (*Mage*, TRINITY) jumps on board for this special issue!

Tom King (w), Matt Wagner (a)

BATMAN #55 (SEPT. 19)

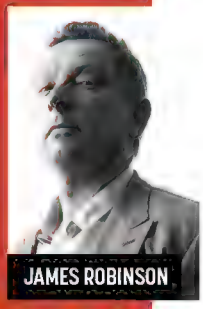
The KGBeast lives! The Russian super-assassin is back–but under whose orders? Does he have a specific mission, or is this simply some leftover Cold War mayhem? Nyet, comrade–it has to do with Bruce Wayne's recent court case involving Mr. Freeze. Something is rotten in Gotham, and you can still smell it, even if it's on ice!

Tom King (w), Tony S. Daniel (a)

BATMAN BEYOND #24 (SEPT. 26)

Bruce Wayne gets to creeping around with his old cohort Jack Ryder (a.k.a. the

DETECTIVE COMICS #988-#989 (SEPT. 12)



JAMES ROBINSON

In Gotham, "ordinary" murders tend not to attract the attention of the famous Caped Crusader–especially when said Crusader has been busy preventing the destruction of the Multiverse, then planning and dealing with the fallout from his own ill-fated wedding.

But Batman is going back to his back-alley roots in the six-part "Deface the Face" arc, guest-written by James Robinson, which begins in DETECTIVE COMICS #988.

Naturally, Batman is in a rough headspace after the events of BATMAN #50. "He's a little bit lost," explains Robinson. "He's using what begins in our storyline as a very average murder mystery to anesthetize himself from the pain in his heart from Selina having not gone through with the marriage."

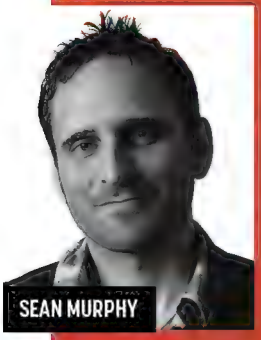
The arc is titled "Deface the Face" as a callback to Robinson's acclaimed "Face the Face" storyline, both of which feature Robinson's favorite Batman villain: Two-Face. "'Face the Face' is about Two-Face dealing with the emotions and feelings of Harvey Dent, who is still there within him–within his heart, within his mind and within his soul," explains Robinson. "He's always at war with himself–the good man who was Harvey Dent and the evil, twisted, psychotic man who is Two-Face."

James Robinson (w), Stephen Segovia (a)

DETECTIVE COMICS #989

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

Artist Sean Gordon Murphy spills the Bat-beans on his timely redesign of Babs' iconic BATGIRL: YEAR ONE costume


SEAN MURPHY

Babs suffers a wardrobe malfunction—and an everything-else malfunction—when the brutal art thief Grotesque takes her down with a souped-up electric baton in BATGIRL #26. Fortunately, a new costume is on the horizon in BATGIRL #27, courtesy of artist extraordinaire Sean Gordon Murphy.

Murphy, the acclaimed creator of BATMAN: WHITE KNIGHT, was tasked with coming up with a design that hearkens back to the original suit first seen in BATGIRL: YEAR ONE. But Murphy was keen not to go too retro. "I was a big fan of what Cameron Stewart did, and I really liked how utilitarian her costume was," says Murphy.

Below, Murphy takes a magnifying glass to some key design details:

- I thought the "belt" could be updated to be more functional, and I wanted to make it bat-shaped.
- I wanted the Bat symbol to be practical as well, merging it with the straps of a backpack so that Barbara can have her clothes [in a bag] behind her cape.
- I made sure to keep away from high heels, for obvious reasons! Instead of the heels, I gave her some parkour "boots to help her climb buildings and bounce off of things.
- The "hair" is my biggest thing. I wanted to see if we could get the idea of having her hair fully exposed for the in-continuity Batgirl. I thought that Barbara being this vibrant redhead is a really important facet of her character, so I loved the idea of really showing off her hair. We had been using the "hood" with the hair coming out of the back for years, so I was really happy when DC Comics okayed that design choice.

CATWOMAN #3

Creeper) to thwart the Scarecrow's attack on Neo-Gotham. But will they be in time to stop Batman and the new Robin from pummeling each other to death? Out of costume, Terry McGinnis must choose between two women who've stolen his heart. Who will win the hand of the Bat-chelor? Find out in the conclusion to "Target: Batman"!
Dan Jurgens (w), Will Conrad (a)

BATMAN: DAMNED #1 (SEPT. 19)

The Joker is dead.

There is no doubt about that. But whether Batman finally snapped his scrawny neck or some other sinister force in Gotham City did the deed is still a mystery.

Problem is, Batman can't remember... and the more he digs into this labyrinthian case, the more his mind starts to doubt everything he's uncovering.

So who better to set him straight than... John Constantine?
Brian Azzarello (w), Lee Bermejo (a)

CATWOMAN #3 (SEPT. 5)

The secret shot-caller who's been borrowing Catwoman's M.O. for a series of crimes steps out of the shadows in this issue, and her "secret origin" is unlike anything Selina's run into before! Meanwhile, the police close in on Catwoman as well, as they believe she killed a cop during one of the crimes she's been framed for. With nowhere to go and no one to turn to, Catwoman's running out of her nine lives fast!
Joëlle Jones (w/a)

THE CURSE OF BRIMSTONE #6 (SEPT. 5)

Nothing is creepier than possessed children. Wait, no, possessed dolls. Those are worse. Anyway, our heroes Joe and

DAMAGE #9

THE FLASH #55

Annie find themselves under assault from a horde of possessed kids, all under the command of the mystical baddie Slackjaw. In reality, Slackjaw's a possessed child himself, so it might be time to call in Brimstone for an exorcism. Unfortunately, Joe's having a crisis of conscience because he doesn't want to fight children, even if they're possessed by the devil. ***Justin Jordan (w), Philip Tan (a)***

DAMAGE #9 (SEPT. 19)

Talk about a brave and bold team-up: Damage has joined forces with a mysterious top military operative, and now the two are on the run from Colonel Jonas and her black-ops team. With his powers back up and running, there's nothing to stop Damage from killing the woman who turned him into a monster–with the possible exception of one dark secret! ***Robert Venditti (w), Diogenes Neves & Trevor Scott (a)***

DEATHSTROKE #35 (SEPT. 5)

In this corner: Deathstroke, suffering from a traumatic brain injury at the hands of Batman! In the other corner: Batman, with Deathstroke's knife in his gut! All of this with the feds invading Wayne Manor–and now they're in the catacombs under the mansion, which lead to the you-know-what-cave! If they're going to escape, Batman and Slade are going to have to work together. ***Christopher Priest (w), Carlo Pagulayan & Jason Paz (a)***

DOOMSDAY CLOCK #7 (SEPT. 26)

The critically acclaimed team of writer Geoff Johns and artist Gary Frank continue the groundbreaking miniseries bringing the world of WATCHMEN to the DC Universe. In this chapter, the truth behind Dr. Manhattan's fascination with the DCU is revealed as the planet teeters on the edge of the Super-War. ***Geoff Johns (w), Gary Frank (a)***

THE FLASH #54 (SEPT. 12)

The Flash is now the strongest man alive, thanks to a jolt from the Strength Force! When he turns his jacked-up sights on the Trickster, the two duke it out inside Iron Heights for utter supremacy. Will anyone stop these two behemoths from beating the hell out of each other...or is this just what Warden Wolfe wants? ***Joshua Williamson (w), Christian Duce (a)***

THE FLASH #55 (SEPT. 26)

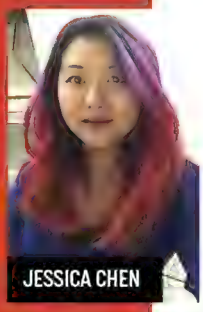
Barry Allen's CSI team gets called to the scene of an arson at Iron Heights, and the victim happens to be a well-known Rogue. Barry's new partner thinks it's an inside job, the warden sending a message to the inmates about who's in charge. But the real culprit turns out to be the latest "Force" threat. Can the Flash and Commander Cold snuff this flaming mystery before it becomes an inferno? ***Joshua Williamson (w), Scott Kolins (a)***

GREEN ARROW #44 (SEPT. 5)

Green Arrow is used to firing at targets–but he's not used to having the bull's-eye on his own back! Social justice vigilante Citizen calls out Oliver Queen as one of his next marks, so now Ollie's fighting a two-front battle in both his private and crime-fighting lives. Green Arrow must protect the others whom Citizen has named in his scheme to eradicate corruption from Seattle, while simultaneously dodging the attacks aimed at him–luckily, he's got Black Canary and Kate

HOT TICKET

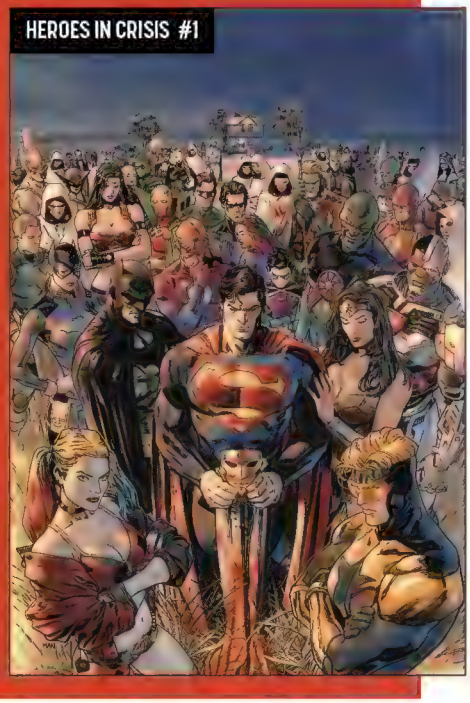
DC Comics staffers pick their personal must-reads for September



JESSICA CHEN

NAME: Jessica Chen
AGE: 30
WHAT I DO: "I'm the associate editor in the Super group, which means I do fun things like make sure Clark Kent and Kara Danvers don't wear green because that subconsciously connects the reader to Kryptonite. But more importantly, I ask the right questions and give the proper encouragement to nurture an environment for my talent that will push them to perform at their peak creative abilities.

The short of it: I'm a story doctor, art critic, recruiter and talent therapist and cheerleader!"
FAVORITE COMICS: "WATCHMEN, Y: THE LAST MAN, HUSH, WE3, Saga, TOM STRONG."
SUPERPOWER: "PUNS! People in the DC office used to dislike my puns, but man, I think it's really groan on them."
EXCITED ABOUT IN SEPTEMBER (AND IT CAN'T BE A BOOK YOU'RE WORKING ON. NO FREE PLUGS!): "Definitely HEROES IN CRISIS! Tom King has cooked up some incredibly interesting and mind-!@#$% concepts about the program superheroes with PTSD go through in Sanctuary, and how curiously the facility is run on the inside, and by whom."



HEROES IN CRISIS #1

LEAN AND CLEAN

Artist Yanick Paquette spills about his artistic influences and shares what tunes get his creative juices flowing for his work on ACTION COMICS!

YANICK PAQUETTE

Yanick Paquette, artist of WONDER WOMAN: EARTH ONE, takes a detour into Metropolis on ACTION COMICS #1003 with Superman and writer Brian Michael Bendis. As the Man of Steel delves deeper into the mystery of a new villain called the Red Cloud, Paquette revealed where he turns for inspiration and ideas when working on a new script.

COLLABORATION "Spending years at a time with Grant Morrison on WONDER WOMAN: EARTH ONE, there's a lot of fluidity to how we work, which is quite freeing. With Bendis, he's extremely generous with the script, giving me examples or even links to movie scenes that are inspiring to him. This level of sharing inspiration has been really fantastic as it gets me in a different, really focused, headspace for the 20-page adventure."

INSPIRATION "There's so much going on in these pages at the Daily Planet, especially little things in the backgrounds. I typically look at guys who are masters at depicting that such as José Luis García-López. He even did some Superman work with Bendis recently at the Daily Planet. I even look at films like Saving Private Ryan. There's a great scene in there where Tom Hanks is having a conversation, but all around them, there's a ton of action going on. It's those things that really make the reader feel like they're in the scene, too."

SOUNDTRACK "When I'm working on the layouts, I love listening to movie soundtracks because they convey drama. It really inspires me for the storytelling aspect because the music is telling a story. But when I'm actually drawing, and it's a matter of grounding my perspective and refining my figure work, I'm a big baroque guy. I listen to a lot of Bach. There's something about the mathematical element to classical music that meshes with the technicality of my drawing."

DRAWING THE MAN OF STEEL "You need to convey the power but [keep] him being gentle. It's a hard balance to strike. I remember when I did the Man of Steel years ago, I was struggling with that a lot. I think in recent years, I've figured it out. Less detail is more [effective] with his face for example. My instincts lean more to a leaner Superman like Kevin Nowlan rather than a big bulky one because I don't think you really need the big over-the-top musculature for him. In my younger days, I had a bit of a Superman vibe to my facial features, so I used me a little, but I made Superman better-looking!" ■

Don't miss ACTION COMICS #1003, September 26!

SUPERMAN
Art by Kevin Nowlan

MAN OF STEEL Art by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez

ACTION COMICS #1003 Art by Yanick Paquette

GREEN LANTERNS #54

HAWKMAN #4

JUSTICE LEAGUE #7

Spencer watching his back. Unfortunately, they can't save him from everything...
Julie Benson & Shawna Benson (w), Javier Fernandez (a)

GREEN LANTERNS #54 (SEPT. 5)
The Cyborg Superman, Hank Henshaw, found a way to override the Green Lanterns' power rings, and he's using that ability to gaslight Simon Baz in part five of the "Evil's Might" storyline. Communicating with Baz through his ring, Henshaw convinces him to trespass in Superman's Fortress of Solitude, where Henshaw will have access to all the cosmic weaponry that would make him unstoppable.
Dan Jurgens (w), Marco Santucci (a)

GREEN LANTERNS #55 (SEPT. 19)
Hank Henshaw, the Ravagers and Eon battle the Green Lantern Corps on Mogo for the fate of the universe! (In other words, it's Tuesday.) Hal Jordan has had enough of this Man of Steel knockoff, so he's seeking out the former Cyborg Superman with the sole intention of handing him his butt! However, Henshaw's ability to hack the Corps' power rings may give him all the leverage he needs to take over the universe.
Dan Jurgens (w), Mike Perkins (a)

HARLEY QUINN #49 (SEPT. 5)
Harley's straight-up clowning around on her latest mission, and she's faced with a real laugher of a puzzle: How does she kill and collect the bounty on Lord Death Man, an immortal murder machine who seemingly can't be killed? Nevertheless, she will persist with a host of attempted assassinations, all doomed to fail. Time is running out, and Harley's running out of material, too!
Sam Humphries (w), Alisson Borges (a)

HARLEY QUINN #50 (SEPT. 19)
While reading a mysterious Harley Quinn comic book, H.Q. accidentally breaks all of reality. And you know the saying: if you break it, you bought it! Now it's up to Harley to travel through both time and space to fix all the continuity errors she created. Luckily, she'll have a little help, 'cuz riding shotgun is none other than special guest star Jonni DC, Continuity Cop!
Sam Humphries (w), John Timms & others (a)

HAWKMAN #4 (SEPT. 12)
It's Hawkman vs. Hall in the brawl for all of Thanagar! Having just teleported across the galaxy, Earthman Carter Hall squares off against Thanagarian space cop Katar Hol in an all-Hawkman slugfest. Katar provides the next piece of the puzzle in Carter's quest to unlock the secrets of his own past–an alien artifact that immediately zooms him back to Earth.
Robert Venditti (w), Bryan Hitch & Andrew Currie (a)

THE IMMORTAL MEN #6 (SEPT. 12)
The Immortal Men are supposed to be a secret world-saving organization. But that cat will be out of the bag if they can't stop the Infinite Woman and her brood of Bloodless soldiers, commanded by the Kill! And as the fight spills out into the greater DC Universe, which classic DC hero will rise to seek the answer to the unanswerable question: Who are the Immortal Men?
James Tynion IV (w), Tyler Kirkham (a)

JUSTICE LEAGUE #7 (SEPT. 5)
It's wall-to-Source-Wall Justice League action as artist Jim Cheung rejoins writer Scott Snyder! Hawkgirl takes wing against Legion of Doom leader Lex Luthor; John Stewart faces off with old foe Sinestro; the Flash must run down the Still Force-empowered Gorilla Grodd; and Wonder Woman tackles the tag team of Black Manta and Cheetah–underwater, no less!
Scott Snyder (w), Jim Cheung & Mark Morales (a)

JUSTICE LEAGUE #8 (SEPT. 19)
Part two of the "Legion of Doom" storyline focuses on Lex Luthor's recruiting efforts–and this time around, he's targeting both Cheetah and Black Manta for membership! Lex knows just what buttons to push to acquire his super-powered muscle, and this issue it's all about getting revenge on Wonder Woman and Aquaman, respectively. We bet they sign right up as soon as they find out Lex has METAL's Batman Who Laughs locked up in Doom HQ!
James Tynion IV (w), Mikel Janín (a)

JUSTICE LEAGUE DARK #3 (SEPT. 26)
Wonder Woman! Swamp Thing! Zatanna! Man-Bat! Um...Detective Chimp! The JL Dark team may not be strong or deep enough to stop the omnipotent Upside-Down Man from taking over our entire plane of existence. UDM takes the JLD apart one by one, but Wonder Woman might have enough mojo to keep everyone alive. Turns out Diana had a power not even she knew about that bursts to the surface, but will it be enough to turn the Upside-Down Man on his head, or is it just a lot of mystical mumbo jumbo?
James Tynion IV (w), Alvaro Martinez Bueno & Raul Fernandez (a)

THE FAST FIVE

TEEN TITANS writer Adam Glass talks about playing the role of Robin and assembling a new, junior super-team

ADAM GLASS

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE NEW TEAM?

GLASS: Damian Wayne is sick of Dick [Grayson]'s hand-me-downs. He wants his own team, he wants his generation. So he recruits two people we know–Red Arrow and Kid Flash– and three people who are brand-new. The idea of that was, taking from the Perez/Wolfman run, let's try to create three new characters for a new generation. Those characters are: Crush, Lobo's daughter, Djinn, a genie who was imprisoned for 4,000 years, and Roundhouse, who was actually my son's idea. We needed our Gar our comic relief, and we found him in Roundhouse.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT WRITING FOR SO MANY UNIQUE CHARACTERS WITH SUCH DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES?

It was really important to me to have the team look like a team of kids from today, a diverse group. It's a chance to explore different sides of humanity. I'm not a 14-year-old girl, but I have a 17-year-old daughter, and what made me think about Crush was, we live in a society where girls aren't supposed to show rage, but girls have a lot of anger and usually have no place to put it! I got a punching bag for my daughter, and she felt so much better.

HOW ARE THE NEW TEEN TITANS SIMILAR TO OR DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS TEEN TITANS TEAMS?

Damian is a different kind of leader. He says, the rules that my dad and his Boy Scout buddy made are not necessarily the rules we have to follow. If you look at other Teen Titans teams, they all wanted to grow up and be their mentors. Kids today don't want to be their mentors, they want to be themselves!

HOW DOES THIS MORE JADED, MORE CYNICAL ITERATION OF THE TEEN TITANS FIT INTO THE LARGER ETHOS OF THE DCU?

Writers like Tom King and Scott Snyder have brought a humanity back to comics. When we were doing the New 52, it was more fun and wild, we didn't talk politics or social issues. Now I feel like we can do all of those things.

WHAT CAN YOU TEASE ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS VILLAIN THE OTHER?

The Other is an ancient evil, and he–or she!–is our great mystery, our big bad whom we will learn has their tentacles involved in many, many things that affect the Teen Titans and also, maybe, the overall DCU. Their history is a long one, and it will be unraveled, and hopefully will be one of the best new villains in the DCU! ■

TEEN TITANS #22 hits shelves on Sept. 19!

TEEN TITANS #20

MISTER MIRACLE #12

JUSTICE LEAGUE ODYSSEY #1
(SEPT. 12)

From the pages of JUSTICE LEAGUE: NO JUSTICE, Cyborg, Starfire and Azrael steal Brainiac's old skull ship to explore the new Ghost Sector. Each has their own reasons for venturing to the deadly sector, and the only thing standing in their way–other than an impenetrable barrier–is Green Lantern Jessica Cruz. The newly formed team soon discovers that the Ghost Sector isn't just a threat, but rather a promise of pain and misery they can't even begin to imagine. And the only person who can help them survive is none other than...Darkseid.
Joshua Williamson (w), Stjepan Sejic (a)

MISTER MIRACLE #12 (SEPT. 12)

It'll be a miracle if you can get through this mind-bending conclusion with your sanity intact! After his epic battle with Darkseid, Scott Free sees life a whole new way: he's the new Highfather of New Genesis, and he's madly in love with his wife and child. But what if it's all a lie? Did Mister Miracle really escape death way back in issue #1? No one really knows but Tom King and Mitch Gerads!
Tom King (w), Mitch Gerads (a)

NEW CHALLENGERS #5 (SEPT. 19)

The team returns to Challengers Mountain, only to find it completely obliterated! And without the mountain to replenish their borrowed time, it looks like they're out of second chances. But for the Challengers to live to fight another day, they'll need to use a power with a consequence that spells certain doom!
Scott Snyder & Aaron Gillespie (w), V Ken Marion & Sandu Florea (a)

NIGHTWING #48

NIGHTWING #48 (SEPT. 5)

Guest-starring the Silencer! Dick Grayson is forced to participate in the world's greatest motorcycle race, a three-day affair hosted on a remote island and populated by the greatest riders on the planet. Nightwing reluctantly complies, but only to save the life of an old friend. That brings him into competition with the Silencer, who's also racing to save a friend. Only one rider can win...so who's gonna leg this one out? That's if they survive the onslaught of super-criminals in the race as well.

Benjamin Percy (w), Amancay Nahuelpan (a)

NIGHTWING #49 (SEPT. 19)

What happens when the race is no longer against each other, but against Leviathan itself? As the head of the snake reappears, and as our heroes are allied against a common enemy, the bike race changes gears and the prize comes into focus–a chance for the winner to sit in the Mobius chair and ask one question.

Benjamin Percy (w), Amancay Nahuelpan (a)

RED HOOD AND THE OUTLAWS #26 (SEPT. 12)

Jason Todd's about to take this vigilante game to a whole new level. His partners, Bizarro and Artemis? Gone! His mentor, Batman? Out! His base of operations, Gotham City? Abandoned. Cast out and alone, Red Hood embarks on a bold, brutal new mission, with a new costume, new weapons and a new plan to punish evildoers across the DCU. Plus, Pete Woods (JUSTICE LEAGUE) joins writer Scott Lobdell as this new era begins!

Scott Lobdell (w), Pete Woods (a)

RED HOOD AND THE OUTLAWS #26

SIDEWAYS #8 (SEPT. 12)

When Sideways leads the Seven Soldiers into the Dark Multiverse to find the missing Manhattan Guardian, the whole trip goes sideways (zing!) when our hero gets separated from the group and becomes lost in this nightmarish realm. And just like any petulant teenager, Sideways won't stop and ask for directions, so now he's trapped in the land of Perrus, ruled by the Dark Beast and populated by weird, Superman-esque creatures, like Porcupine Jimmy Olsen.

Dan DiDio (w), Kenneth Rocafort (a)

THE SILENCER #9 (SEPT. 26)

Is there anything worse than a family vacation? Your spouse grouses, the kids complain, rest-stop food is gross–to make things worse, Silencer finds not one, but TWO deadly assassins on her tail! Talia al Ghul is in desperate need of a Lazarus Pit bath, and to get one she needs her top assassin Wishbone to throw Silencer off the trail! Problem is, Silencer isn't the only one on the hunt.

Dan Abnett (w), Patch Zircher (a)

SUICIDE SQUAD #46 (SEPT. 12)

The Aquaman crossover continues in part three of "Sink Atlantis"! The squad slinks deeper into Atlantis on their mission to sink the risen undersea kingdom. But when Harley reveals that they've got a nuclear bomb in tow to get the job done, the team might just tear one another apart before they're able to complete the task at hand. Aquaman confronts the Squad with a gang of his own just as Mera's coronation begins, and the moment you've all been waiting for arrives: Killer Croc versus King Shark!

Rob Williams (w), Jose Luis (a)

SUPERMAN #3

SUPERGIRL #22 (SEPT. 12)

Who murdered Krypton? Supergirl and Krypto rocket into space, en route to the Green Lantern world of Mogo, where she hopes to find clues about Rogol Zaar and his connection to the destruction of Krypton. Instead, she finds whispers and cover-ups. What are the GLs hiding? And will they go from green to red when they find out she's in possession of Zaar's weapon of war? (Hint: yes!)

Marc Andreyko (w), Kevin Maguire (a)

SUPERMAN #3 (SEPT. 12)

Guest-starring the Justice League! Locked inside the Phantom Zone, the Earth stands poisoned and its heroes lie dying, with no idea how to escape the deadly Kryptonian trap. But an even deadlier threat invades as Rogol Zaar teams with those who have been imprisoned inside the Phantom Zone to use Earth to escape, not caring if they destroy the planet to do it.

Brian Michael Bendis (w), Ivan Reis & Joe Prado (a)

TEEN TITANS #22 (SEPT. 19)

The team's dealing with an unexpected loss, but there's little time to grieve. They must travel to Keystone City, where Golden Glider and Swerve plan to pull a heist at a children's hospital. (That's a new low, even for some Rogues!) There's also plenty of drama to go around, as Kid Flash mulls quitting after his clash with Red Arrow, and Damian's harboring a new, secret mentor, all while his big secret's about to blow up in his face.

Adam Glass (w), Bernard Chang (a)

THE TERRIFICS #8 (SEPT. 26)

The Terrifics find themselves stuck up a

UNSPOOLING THE SANDMAN UNIVERSE

The epic Sandman saga continues in two new Sandman Universe series hitting shelves this month: THE DREAMING, from writer Simon "Si" Spurrier and artist Bilquis Evely, and HOUSE OF WHISPERS, written by Nalo Hopkinson and illustrated by Dominike "Domo" Stanton.

In THE DREAMING #1 (Sept. 5), Dream's titular realm has been abandoned by its ruler, and chaos reigns in his absence. Dream's warden, Lucien, doubts his own mind, as his library of unwritten stories crumbles into decay. Meanwhile, a monstress named Dora takes advantage of the instability and sells dreams to the highest bidder...as something horrific waits with tooth and talon outside the gates.

HOUSE OF WHISPERS #1 (Sept. 12) breaks open a brand-new corner of the Sandman Universe: Erzulie Freda's House of Dahomey, a.k.a. the House of Whispers.

When Erzulie scries upon the mortal realm and observes four human girls open up a mysterious and magical journal, she recognizes the book with the power to release her cousin Sopona, the lord of infectious diseases, into the human plane.

Don't miss the beginning of new adventures you could only dream of, in THE DREAMING #1 (Sept. 5) and HOUSE OF WHISPERS #1 (Sept. 12)! ■

Simon Spurrier, Nalo Hopkinson (w), Bilquis Evely, Dominike Stanton (a

THE DREAMING #1

TITANS #25

WONDER WOMAN #54

cosmic tree with the newly rediscovered Tom Strong–and the fire department ain't coming to rescue them! The team gets split up while trying to escape this devious trap set for them by a mysterious enemy known as Doc Dread, and they wind up in a bunch of weird dimensions trippier than a spin on the "Yellow Submarine"! Is there a cure awaiting our afflicted adventurers at the end of this other-dimensional adventure? Or will Plastic Man, Metamorpho, Phantom Girl and Mr. Terrific be trapped in Tom Strong's stronghold peddling snake oil instead?
Jeff Lemire (w), Dale Eaglesham (a)

TITANS #25 (SEPT. 12)

The Titans split into three separate squads to combat the growing Source Wall Event threat in this anniversary issue! As Raven, Steel and Beast Boy contain an alien-robot outbreak, and Donna Troy tracks down the Blood Cult, who claim to have deadly new knowledge of how to manipulate Source Wall energy, Nightwing and Miss Martian are fighting each other while also fighting for survival against a new metahuman threat with a penchant for creating pocket dimensions. Can Dick and M'gann put aside their differences, or will her terrible secret derail the whole thing before they resolve anything?
Dan Abnett (w), Brandon Peterson, Guillem March & Roger Robinson (a)

TITANS #26 (SEPT. 26)

Spinning out of events in issue #25, Donna is on the trail of the newly revitalized Blood Cult, whose evil experiments have transformed an entire town into bloodthirsty zombies! Plus, Miss Martian must wrestle with her own inner demons before she completely loses control!
Dan Abnett (w), Brent Peeples & Matt Santorelli (a)

THE UNEXPECTED #4 (SEPT. 5)

The Unexpected race to save Gotham City from exposure to the toxic Nth metal–and you don't come to Gotham without meeting the Bat-Family! But who else besides Batman knows enough about the Dark Multiverse and the poisonous Nth metal to be of help? Enter the Huntress! And it all wraps up in Castle Frankenstein!
Steve Orlando (w), Cary Nord & Wade von Grawbadger (a)

WONDER WOMAN #54 (SEPT. 12)

Diana's model U.N. project goes up in flames when she tries to intervene and stop the exiled Bana-Mighdall Amazons from invading the nation of Qurac under false pretenses. She clashes with Artemis, who wants her exiled sisters to go to war, despite the fact that the expat Amazons are being manipulated...by none other than the deadly Rustam, Quraci seditionist and rebel leader! Now it's up to Wonder Woman to lasso this runaway war train before it can get up to speed–and it's about to pull out of the station.
Steve Orlando (w), Raul Allen (a)

WONDER WOMAN #55 (SEPT. 26)

Two armies stand ready to annihilate each other, with Wonder Woman and Artemis caught in the middle, fighting for the souls of the exiled Amazons living in Bana-Mighdall! Does Diana possess the might and diplomatic prowess to convince her sisters to stop their march toward war? Who will fall beneath the flaming swords of Rustam?
Steve Orlando (w), Raul Allen (a)

WHO WILL DIE?
THE DARK SECRET OF SANCTUARY
Go inside TOM KING's and CLAY MANN's
HEROES IN CRISIS!
BATMAN
AFTER THE WEDDING DISASTER, THE DARK KNIGHT FALLS INTO DARKNESS
GREEN LANTERN
GRANT MORRISON AND LIAM SHARP'S TRIP INTO THE FINAL FRONTIER!
WALKER HENNESSY WRIGHT
DC NATION #4
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IN STORES SEPT. 5!

TALES FROM ARKHAM

Writer Christopher Priest dives deeper into the psyche of Slade Wilson during his "Deathstroke: Asylum" arc in October

After orchestrating the brutal, physical confrontation between Deathstroke and the Dark Knight in DEATHSTROKE #30-35, writer Christopher Priest trades brawn for brains in the more psychologically oriented DEATHSTROKE #36's "Asylum" arc (October 3). Slade Wilson finds himself locked up with Gotham's most notorious rogues, and though Priest takes a slightly different approach to life inside Arkham, he insists that there will definitely still be "mayhem."

We caught up with Priest in between Slade Wilson's therapy sessions to find out what makes Deathstroke–and Arkham–tick.

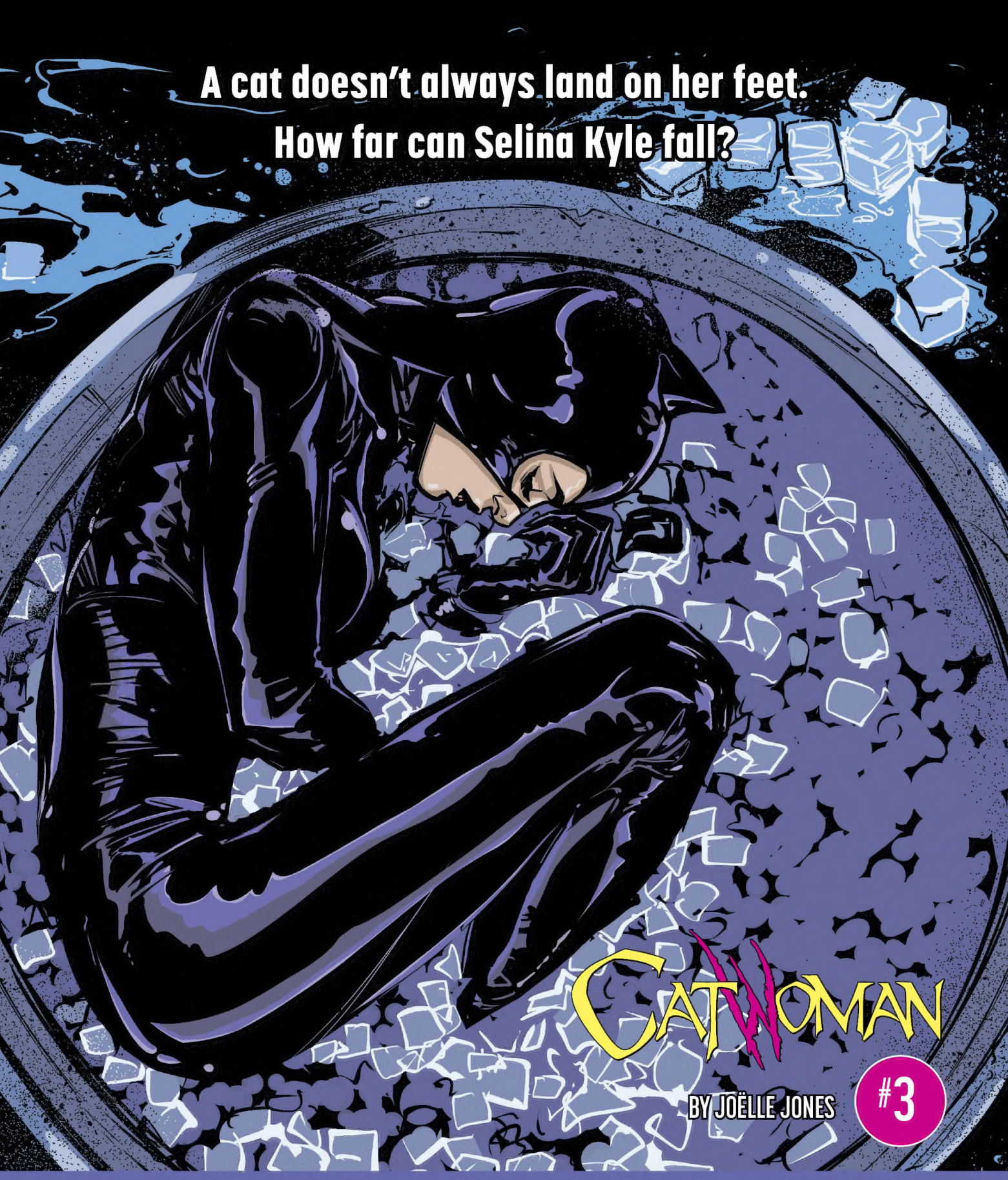
SLADE'S BIGGEST THREAT "I'd say Slade himself. At the center of the story is Slade Wilson, Deathstroke, finally being forced to confront his own inner demons and question his own emotional health. I've frequently described Deathstroke as House MD, the Hugh Laurie character, with a machine gun. He's emotionally stunted; he's a guy who, like all of us, wants to love and be loved, but he's capable of neither. And he's addicted to the lifestyle that he leads. It's like a drug to him. So he's a guy with a whole bunch of mental health issues that he has not taken seriously because he thinks it's all a bunch of hooey."

ARKHAM (RE)DEFINED "I'm just stealing from everyone else! [laughs] I just had Grant Morrison send me a bunch of his stuff, so I'm looking at ARKHAM ASYLUM: A SERIOUS HOUSE ON SERIOUS EARTH."

PLAYING WELL WITH OTHERS "Slade's whole attitude is: never trust a criminal. I know it sounds ridiculous, because Slade is a criminal, but he doesn't see himself as a criminal–he's just a working stiff, and he happens to kill people for a living. Other portrayals of Deathstroke have positioned him as a larger-than-life world conqueror or a Lex Luthor type, but I don't think that was [NEW TEEN TITANS writer] Marv Wolfman's original intent for the character. I think he saw Slade as a dark side of Batman."

WHO'D YOU ROOM WITH IN ARKHAM? "I'd probably pick Two-Face, because Harvey Dent is perfectly reasonable and rational. You just have to hope the coin comes up the right way the whole time–or don't put him in those kinds of positions where he's going to flip it. With Two-Face, I would understand what the rules were, while a guy like Solomon Grundy, you never know what side of the bed he's gonna get up on!"" ■

DEATHSTROKE straps on a straightjacket in October's **DEATHSTROKE #36** by **Christopher Priest** and **Ed Benes**.



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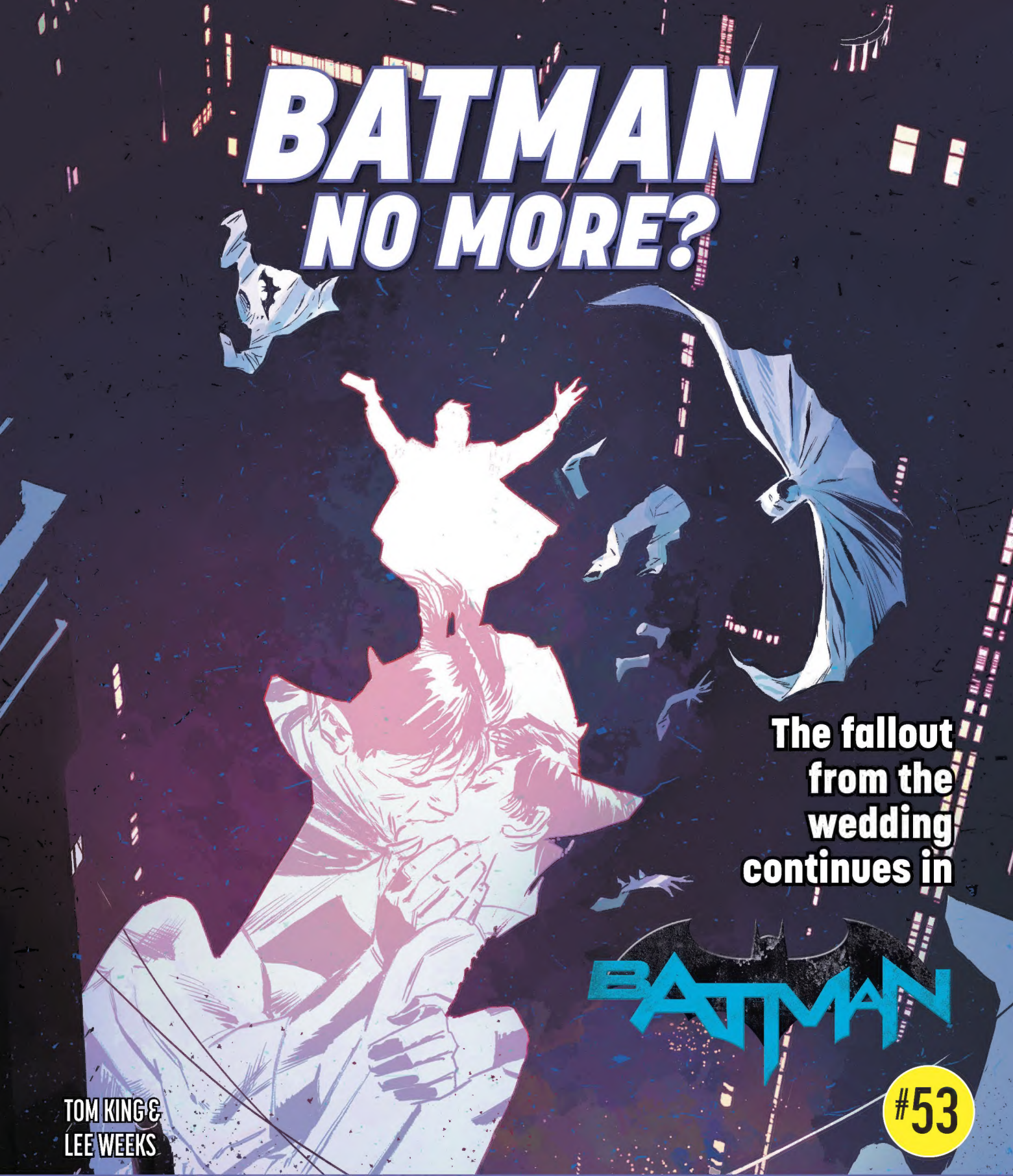

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